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4 December 2013

Mr David Hulbert  
Interim Headteacher  
High Well School - South Hiendley  
High Well Hill Lane  
South Hiendley  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Hulbert

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of High Well School - South Hiendley**

Following my visit to your school on 3 December 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Corporate Director, Children and Young People for Wakefield.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2013**

- Improve teaching to be consistently good or better in order to raise achievement rapidly across all year groups, by:
  - developing teachers' knowledge and skills so that in all subjects they plan their lessons using methods that engage, challenge and give all students the scope to take charge of their own learning and the motivation to work hard
  - raising teachers' expectations in relation to students' behaviour, their cooperation and positive contribution to lessons
  - increasing the pace of learning and ensuring students are encouraged to read and write often and have good opportunities in mathematics to improve their skills in number, calculation and problem-solving
  - making the assessment of students' starting points and progress consistent in rigour and accuracy across the school
  - ensuring teachers use assessments to plan work for students that is precisely matched to their level of attainment and build systematically on what students already know and can do.
  
- Improve students' behaviour and attendance, by:
  - ensuring that all staff develop the insights and skills to manage students' behaviour with consistency and to good effect
  - reducing significantly the high level of exclusions prompted by students' unacceptable behaviour
  - redoubling efforts to reduce the high level of absence through the work of the family support adviser and the school's incentives to encourage good attendance.
  
- Improve leadership and the capacity to improve the school, by:
  - developing and implementing a comprehensive scheme of rigorous checks on the school's work especially in relation to teaching and students' outcomes
  - improving leaders' skills in observing and evaluating the quality of teaching so that they give teachers clear feedback on their areas for improvement
  - strengthening the part played by teachers' performance management and their professional development in improving teaching
  - ensuring the tracking of students' progress is accurate and clear in showing which students make expected progress and which make less or more than this, leading to an accurate judgement on the school's effectiveness in promoting good achievement
  - making more effective use of pupil premium funding
  - reviewing the curriculum and amending it as necessary to ensure it offers good opportunities for literacy and numeracy in all subjects.
  
- Improve governance by:
  - making sure governors are given comprehensive reports and accurate evaluations of the school's work so that they can challenge leaders effectively and set them clear expectations that will lead to improvement.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 3 December 2013.**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work including parts of six lessons, five of which were observed jointly with the deputy headteacher. She scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, senior staff, the parent support adviser and the Chair of the Governing Body. She attended a meeting of the school council and spoke by telephone to the local authority's school improvement adviser.

### **Context**

The process of restructuring the school's provision is under way. Two teachers have been absent long-term due to ill health. Their lessons are being covered by long-term supply teachers.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

With the exception of two students who had exceptionally low attendance last year, all Year 11 leavers gained some accreditation in a range of subjects. Five students gained GCSE passes in mathematics and science and two achieved GCSEs in English. Most students achieved Entry Level qualifications in English, mathematics and science and about one third also gained accreditation at this level in information and communication technology. However, because a consistent, reliable system for tracking students' progress over time has not been in place, the school is unable to judge confidently whether the qualifications gained represent good progress for these students. About two thirds have moved on to education and training.

A system for setting targets for students has been established. Targets are based on information about students' performance in previous years or on assessments conducted when students join the school. However, although they are expected to make at least the same rate of progress as students nationally, leaders need to ensure that targets do not build in underachievement resulting from, for instance, earlier gaps in students' schooling. Students' progress towards their targets is being assessed at regular intervals. Assessments this term show that younger students are doing better than older students. All students in Years 7 and 8, and almost all in Year 9, are at least on track to meet their targets. However, a number of students in Years 10 and 11 are working below their target levels.

The school has begun to address the need to improve students' literacy in a range of ways. Key subject specific vocabulary is displayed in lessons. The use of iPads, funded through the pupil premium, has supported a focus on better spelling and links to the local authority's e-reading programme. Testing has helped to identify the low level of students' comprehension skills compared with their reading ages and training has been held to help staff address this in all lessons. The progress of students for whom regular additional literacy sessions are in place will be measured at intervals.

## **The quality of teaching**

Almost all lessons observed during this inspection required improvement or were good but none were outstanding. The impact of a range of training to improve the quality of teaching has been dissipated to some extent by the long-term absences of two teachers.

Nonetheless, the positive impact of support and coaching provided by a partner school is evident in some lessons and this is being extended to include supply staff.

In the better lessons seen, relationships between staff and students were good and formed a firm foundation for effective behaviour management. The purpose and relevance of the lessons were clear to students so they engaged well with the activities and tasks set. Well chosen resources helped to maintain students' interest and engagement. For instance in a Years 8/9 science lesson, holding up bags of groceries of various weights helped students begin to understand the effect of gravity on different planets.

Where lessons were less successful the work set was not at the right level for all the students in the group and no activities were available to stretch those who are more-able. At times, the steps students were expected to take in their learning were too big and lessons did not include enough activities to develop their understanding incrementally. Teachers' explanations were not always clear enough and opportunities to consolidate each stage in learning were rushed so foundations for the next part of the lesson were not firm enough. In some instances adults restricted the development of students' independent learning skills by providing too much support for them.

Teaching assistants made a positive contribution to the learning and behaviour of students in all the lessons observed.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

There have been some notable improvements in students' behaviour. This term there has been a marked reduction in the number of days lost to exclusion, compared with the same period last year. An internal exclusion unit has been introduced and a number of students have spent time working in it, but this still represents a reduction in the need to remove students from normal school life. Leaders have changed the grouping of some students, particularly in Year 10, where the greatest number of incidents of poor behaviour occurs. The number of restraints has reduced considerably. A very small number were required at the beginning of the term, but not since.

The new reward system is helping to make the link between behaviour and consequences real for students. They understand how to accrue or lose points for which they can gain rewards such as vouchers to spend and a trip to the swimming pool. The school council is directly involved in deciding how many points are required to participate in some treats, such as the Christmas outing, and the types of behaviour that will rule students out. Councillors showed a mature approach in deciding what is fair, listening to one another as ideas were put forward and expressing their own views sensibly.

Well structured, consistent approaches to challenging absence are paying dividends: attendance is improving gradually and fewer students are persistently absent. Rewards and certificates are helping to motivate students to attend and an increasing number have full attendance. The school is taking responsibility for raising attendance, working in tandem with the local authority's education welfare service. When there are concerns about a student's attendance, graduated warnings are sent to parents and these are followed up by home visits when necessary. Fast-track procedures have been introduced. Support for a student with a poor attendance, due to join the school in January 2014, is already being considered.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Senior leaders are successfully keeping the school on track with its planned improvements. There has been a sensible division of responsibilities, with the interim headteacher leading on the negotiations and procedures for restructuring the school while substantive leaders focus on development work. Middle leaders are playing a significant part in this and are following a recognised course to support the growth of their leadership skills.

Leaders have an increasingly accurate view of the school's performance. New systems, as well as support from a partner school to moderate judgements, are contributing to this. A calendar of quality assurance activities, such as regular learning walks and lesson observations, is in place. These are helping leaders to identify training needs as well as ascertain the impact of training already held. Review points are set, for instance to evaluate the impact of training on strategies to improve students' reading comprehension. The system for setting targets and tracking students' progress towards these is also helping leaders identify strengths and areas for development. There has been a robust approach to eradicating inadequate teaching.

A thorough review of the curriculum is under way, supported by partner schools and a broad range of professionals from local authority services. The starting point is students' needs, evident in their statements of special educational needs, rather than a subject based approach. Plans are at the early stage for an integrated curriculum which incorporates support for students' personal development within a thematic approach to delivering the key skills students require. Elements of this approach have been introduced for Key Stage 3 students one day each week. A series of themes are being followed, drawing in a range of curriculum areas. In some instances the themes are being enriched by visitors. For example, during Black History month students worked successfully with a professional musician, resulting in a performance in assembly.

The governing body is working effectively, with appropriate committees in place. Governors are refining their requirements for information from the headteacher's report and, rightly, have established the practice of receiving this well ahead of meetings. Helpfully, governors are notifying the headteacher of questions prior to full governing body meetings. Governors visit the school to check on progress for themselves and are introducing protocols for such visits. A system to ensure that policies are reviewed in a regular and timely way is being established.

## **External support**

The partnership with two local special schools established last term is benefiting the school. At the most senior level, support on strategic issues and in checking on progress with the action plan is valued by the interim headteacher. Joint training events on teaching and learning have been well received. Support and coaching for individual teachers are paying dividends and there are plans for these to continue.

The school improvement adviser has identified developing an appropriate curriculum as a significant piece of work and helpfully invested much of her time in supporting the school with this. A more collaborative approach to working with the educational welfare and the educational psychology services has developed. Links with CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) are stronger with the agreement for monthly support for the school to begin shortly.