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Executive Headteacher
Mrs Karen Kerridge
Woodlands School
Takely End
Kingswood
Basildon
SS16 5BA

Dear Mrs Kerridge

Special measures monitoring inspection of Woodlands School

Following my visit to your school on 28 January 2014, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2013.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection with you, other senior leaders and teachers, students, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (the school's governing body), and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action, the school's improvement plan and documents relating to the outcomes of monitoring activities. I made short visits to a number of lessons and looked at the way in which teachers give students feedback on their work.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the local authority has put in place an interim executive board to secure the governance of the school. The headteacher, a deputy

headteacher and a number of other colleagues have left the school, and you have been appointed as executive headteacher. The school is considering whether to become a sponsored academy later this year.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You are taking determined action to implement clear, appropriately-prioritised plans to improve teaching, learning and other aspects of the school's provision. The ambition for each and every student that you communicate has helped to raise expectations of what can be achieved. Students are working towards targets that are demanding but realistic. They know the levels or grades that they are aiming for, and explained during the inspection what they need to do to achieve them. Teachers and leaders are monitoring students' progress carefully and plan swift and effective intervention for those who need additional support or challenge. Students appreciate the impact of changes you have made in response to their feedback, such as the recent alterations to the way in which they prepare for controlled assessment tasks. Leaders use the accurate information generated by the school's monitoring systems to identify where improvements are needed and precisely-tailored support is helping teachers to improve.

Behaviour that aids learning is rewarded promptly, following changes to the school's behaviour policy, and there are fewer incidents of behaviour that disrupts learning. The school no longer makes use of the sanction of fixed-period exclusion, meaning that students miss fewer lessons. Students commented that the introduction of a shorter lunch period has helped reduce misbehaviour outside of lessons and during the afternoon's learning. In the lessons visited during the inspection, students were engaged, and behaved well, because their teachers planned interesting and challenging activities that matched their ages and abilities. They were keen to contribute and supportive of each other's learning. Some teachers used questioning to encourage students to develop their ideas further, explain their thinking, or justify their arguments, as well as to check knowledge and understanding. These techniques helped to stretch more-able students. Students receive regular feedback on their work that makes clear what they need to do to improve it. In some subject areas, teachers provide opportunities for students to respond to their feedback, helping them move forward more quickly. Teachers and other adults who support the learning of disabled students and those who have special educational needs are starting to work together to plan activities to better meet these students' needs, following a review of provision in this area.

The interim executive board is supporting you in holding leaders and other staff to account for standards in their areas. Governors have a clear understanding of the

school's priorities and ask challenging questions, informed by their analysis of information provided by you and your senior leaders and by their visits to the school.

The local authority has worked with the school effectively to draw up, and help to implement, clear plans for improvement. Advisers are helping to support and develop the ability of senior and middle leaders to make accurate judgments about standards in their areas. They are ensuring leaders and teachers can use the information they have about students' progress to plan support for those who need it. Specialists in English and science have helped colleagues to make improvements in those areas. Subsequent reviews have demonstrated the initial impact of this work.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

The school may appoint no more than one newly qualified teacher in each of the English, mathematics and science curriculum areas before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, and the Director of Children's Services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard

Her Majesty's Inspector