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7 March 2014

Mrs Lyndsey Kane  
Acting Headteacher  
Westlands School  
Westlands Lane  
Torquay  
TQ1 3PE

Dear Mrs Kane

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Westlands School**

Following my visit with Christine Emerson and Howard Dodd, Additional inspectors, to your school on 5 and 6 March 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 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 June 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 appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. The number of newly qualified teachers should not exceed five. They may be appointed to any subject department.

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 Director of Children's Services for Torbay.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better and ensure that by the summer of 2014, all teachers:
  - set work at the right level to challenge all students and make sure that lessons absorb, enthuse and stretch them so that they make at least the progress that is expected of them
  - use questioning more effectively to challenge, engage and encourage students to extend their thinking and develop their reasoning further
  - provide plentiful opportunities for students to use and develop their mathematical skills in meaningful and real-life contexts
  - mark work more regularly and provide students with accurate feedback about how they can improve their work
  - check that students act upon the advice given and can demonstrate a better knowledge and understanding as a result
  - share the best practice seen in teaching, such as engaging students in assessing their own progress and in active learning, and in setting them deadlines to complete tasks that accelerate their progress.
  
- Raise achievement, particularly for boys and the more able, by:
  - supporting and challenging teachers to bring about rapid improvements to their teaching and leadership and management, especially in English, mathematics and core science
  - ensuring that assessment information is used systematically to better inform the planning of learning for all students in lessons
  - monitoring the progress of individual students better so that all teachers know when to intervene to support those at risk of underachieving
  - eradicating or significantly reducing gaps between different groups of learners and helping students to make better progress in the second year of the sixth form.
  
- Improve leadership and management, including governance by:
  - involving all leaders, managers and governors in a thorough and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and using this information to construct and implement a clear plan for improvement that includes challenging, measurable targets and timescales, and that has a positive impact on students' learning and progress
  - equipping all leaders with the skills to tackle the school's weaknesses and ensure this is done with greater urgency
  - strengthening the effectiveness of all leaders in monitoring agreed policies and procedures and in taking appropriate actions to raise the quality of teaching to accelerate the progress of learners in a clear, positive and measurable way
  - ensuring that the governing body challenges school leaders about students' examination performance, the quality of teaching and the

effective use of pupil premium funding.

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 5 and 6 March 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, senior and middle leaders, staff, groups of pupils, parents and carers, members of the governing body, the National Leader of Education who is supporting the school, and a representative from the local authority. They observed 36 lessons, almost all of which were jointly observed with senior or middle leaders, and examined students' work. A few students with special educational needs were heard reading.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, the headteacher has left the school. The deputy headteacher has assumed the role of acting headteacher and an assistant headteacher is now the acting deputy headteacher. The school is due to become a sponsored academy on 1 June 2014. The sponsor is a local outstanding school. The headteacher of this school is a National Leader of Education and is currently supporting the improvements in Westlands School.

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

The achievement of the current Year 11 students is improving rapidly, especially in English, due to rigorous checking of their progress towards more challenging targets and effective intervention programmes. Early entry to GCSE examinations in English and mathematics indicate attainment now exceeds the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. Attainment in 2013 had fallen below the floor standards. The more robust system for checking students' progress is being applied throughout the school. Intervention for students in Year 10 is effective in improving their progress. However, students in Year 9, and especially in Year 8, are underachieving. Most of the Year 7 students are making good progress, although those with low prior attainment are not developing the necessary reading skills to help them to learn and make progress across lessons. Gaps in the achievement of boys, the most-able students, those supported by pupil premium funding, disabled students and those with special educational needs are beginning to close in some, but not all, subjects.

While the achievement of students in the sixth form continues to require improvement, the students are making better progress in both Years 12 and 13. This is due to improvements in the quality of teaching and in checking students' progress towards more challenging targets. Students report that teachers' feedback in marking is now more helpful as it relates precisely to the grade requirements. More students are continuing from Year 12 into Year 13 than previously.

## **The quality of teaching**

Improvements in teaching, especially in English, mathematics and science, are beginning to promote better progress for students at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Subject leaders are ensuring that teachers' assessments are accurate and that they are used to plan lessons for the range of students in each class. In most lessons, work is now set at the right level of challenge for the majority of students, although the most-able are not always stretched enough through higher expectations and probing questions. Not all teachers are skilled in assessing students' progress during the lesson and adapting the activities, pace and questions to extend it.

Most teachers are explaining subjects and demonstrating skills more clearly, for example through using new technologies such as interactive whiteboards. As a result of the improvements, students, particularly boys, are showing more interest in their learning. Students say they are making better progress in mathematics because it is more challenging and related to real-life contexts. They know their target levels or grades, but do not know what is required to reach them in all subjects. Teaching assistants provide effective support for most disabled students and those with special educational needs in lessons. The special educational needs coordinator is new and is not yet evaluating the students' progress well enough to promote good progress for all identified students.

Across subjects, the quality of teachers' marking is improving. This is due to a new marking policy and the fact that senior leaders are checking that all teachers are applying it. Where teaching is most effective, teachers note precisely how students can improve their work, and there is evidence that students have responded to the advice. Subject leaders are making sure that their teams share the best practice in teaching, such as engaging students in also assessing their own progress, extending the opportunities for them to contribute to lessons and setting deadlines for them to complete work.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' attitudes to learning, their behaviour in lessons and around the school, and their punctuality to lessons, are improving as a result of better teaching and more consistent application of the behaviour policy by the staff. Most teachers have positive working relationships with the students. Specialist provision for students with behavioural difficulties is very effective in helping them to manage their behaviour. Behaviour overall, however, still requires improvement as it is not yet consistently good in all lessons. While attendance remains below average, it is beginning to improve due to regular checking and contact with identified families. The school continues to keep students safe and secure. Students report that they feel safe in school and that the school helps them to know how to keep themselves safe from risks such as cyber bullying. They say there is little bullying in school and incidents that do occur are tackled effectively by the staff.

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

Effective support from the National Leader of Education is enabling the acting headteacher and senior leaders to provide clearer direction for improvement for the staff. The acting headteacher has ensured that higher aspirations and clear expectations are set out in the recently prepared school action plan. The plan includes challenging, measurable targets and timescales that are bringing about more rapid improvement in teaching and learning, which in turn is raising attainment. She is making sure that communication with staff and parents and carers is also improving, for example through regular briefings, newsletters and use of the website.

Senior leaders are strengthening the capacity to sustain improvements in teaching and learning by successfully developing the skills of subject leaders in evaluating the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's self-evaluation is becoming increasingly accurate as senior and subject leaders link what they observe in lessons to information on students' progress and to the level of work they see in students' books. They are also now asking students for feedback on their learning and holding staff to account for the progress that students make. The performance management and training of staff are now more closely linked to the priorities in the action plan, especially in raising students' achievement. However, the impact on achievement of some leadership roles is not evident and is in need of further review.

An external review of governance has helped the governing body to be clear about its role in holding the school to account for the standards students reach. Several governors have left since the section 5 inspection, but the members that remain have the training and expertise to monitor the school's progress in implementing its action plan. As a result, they are beginning to challenge the school on the progress of all students, including those supported by the pupil premium.

Governors are aware of the need to maintain the focus of senior leaders on school improvement during the next few weeks when the school will be recruiting a new headteacher, preparing to become an academy and managing the redundancy process that has arisen due to fewer students applying to attend the school. They understand the need to ensure a balanced budget in preparation to become an academy.

### **External support**

The local authority has arranged for the National Leader of Education to support the school's improvement work. This is proving effective, as seen in the recent rise in GCSE standards. The National Leader of Education is supporting the school in the academy process and in the recruitment of the headteacher. The local authority is providing effective support in the redundancy process from its human resources department. However, it has not yet established regular meetings with the acting headteacher and governors to check on the school's progress on its action plan. The

local authority's statement of action, which was judged fit for purpose in the first monitoring visit, makes provision for this.

**Priorities for further improvement:**

- Improve the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
  - developing teachers' skills in assessing students' progress during the lesson and extending it further through adapting activities, pace and questions, especially for the most-able students
  - making sure students know what is required to reach their target levels or grades
  - checking that all students identified with special educational needs are making good progress.
  
- Improve the progress of all students in Years 7 to 9, and significantly reduce gaps between different groups, particularly in reading.
  
- Ensure all leaders and managers take effective action to raise students' achievement.