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26 March 2014

Ms Audrey Chamberlain  
Headteacher  
Woodside School  
Halt Robin Road  
Belvedere  
Bexley  
DA17 6DW

Dear Ms Chamberlain

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodside School**

Following my visit to your school on 25 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspections. The school should take further action to improve:

- its planning by merging its plans into a single plan, incorporating a sharper focus on the students' achievement in the success criteria and interim check points for monitoring the plan's effectiveness
- the use of assessment information, so that leaders are better informed on the progress of different groups and teachers can target their teaching more precisely
- how leaders use assessment information to identify additional training needs and, check the impact of initiatives and interventions on students' achievement.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders and staff with posts of responsibility, three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and two representatives from the local authority to discuss the actions being taken to improve the school. I spoke informally with some parents during and at the end of the school day. I evaluated your post-Ofsted action plan and reviewed other relevant documentation. I joined you and your deputies on a tour of the Halt Robin Road and Coyer Lane sites, making brief visits to the lessons of students in all year groups.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection four new teaching assistants have been appointed. The building work in Coyer Lane, to provide specialist premises for students with autistic spectrum disorders, has been completed. This has enabled some teachers and 61 students to transfer there on 24 March 2014. Two vacancies on the governing body remain unfilled.

## **Main findings**

The headteacher and senior leaders have managed the transfer of students to the new site well. During our visits to lessons we saw students already settled and participating in the carefully planned and varied programme of orientation and adjustment.

The headteacher is providing a strong steer in making improvements. However, the post-Ofsted action is too focussed on the areas identified as requiring improvement at the last inspection at the cost of other aspects previously identified by school for development. For example, the school needs to focus on improving the quality of teaching for all students and not just those with autistic spectrum disorders. Success criteria and interim check points to assess the effectiveness of actions have not been incorporated into the post-Ofsted action plan. The plan does not indicate with sufficient sharpness how each of the actions will lead to better outcomes for students. Nonetheless timescales are appropriate, the role of governors to monitor actions is clear and targets for students' achievement have been included.

Since the inspection, the headteacher and senior leaders have improved the quality of teaching for students with autistic spectrum disorders and those with moderate learning difficulties. The reorganising of the school timetable is making best use of staff expertise. A new marking policy is helping teachers and students assess what aspects of students' work need to be improved. The headteacher and senior leaders are undertaking a wider range of activities to assess the quality of teaching and drive improvement. During our tour of the new school, we saw signs that teachers are making better use of workstations to provide more opportunities for students to carry out short activities without adult support. This is also giving teachers and

teaching assistants more time to work intensively with students to improve their communication and literacy skills. Opportunities such as 'the getting to good' programme and coaching are helping teachers to improve their practice. However, as we saw, and as your monitoring records show, inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching at both sites.

Leaders and teachers are making the most of the new facilities to improve the teaching of students with autistic spectrum disorders. All classrooms have been equipped with carefully chosen new teaching resources. Training for all staff has taken place to ensure that there is a consistent approach to their use. However, it is too early to assess the impact on students' learning. Leaders have rightly decided to keep displays in classrooms to a minimum at Colyer Road. However, at Halt Robin Road displays are not sufficiently well used to excite and aid students in their learning. For instance, they do not provide students with prompts or reminders, or highlight the strengths in their work.

The school has extensive information about the performance of students which helps leaders to track their progress over time. Recent moderation with two other schools shows that teachers' assessments are highly accurate. However, teachers do not always make best use of this information to target their teaching precisely enough. School leaders are not sufficiently sharp in analysing the progress made by different groups of students. As a result, they do not identify additional training needs to address any weaker aspects of teaching. Leaders do not assess the impact of initiatives and interventions on students' achievement so these can be honed and refined.

The recommended external review of governance is part way through; consequently the findings have yet to be reported or influence the work of the governing body. Governors are beginning to challenge the school more. They are now more active in finding out about the work of the school. For example, a governor has met with the lead of information and communication technology to gain better insight into the use of new technologies across the school. Governors have yet to fill two vacancies on the governing body and are aiming that these appointments will strengthen the expertise of the governing body.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority has a good understanding of the school's context, strengths and areas for development. Through the new partnership board, established since the inspection, local authority officers are helping senior leaders and governors to evaluate actions, supporting them in the next steps and brokering any required

expertise. Four teachers are now on improving teaching programmes. Good support has been provided by a local school leader, with expertise in special educational needs, to check the quality of teaching. She has provided teaching assistants with training so they are more effectively supporting students with their learning in lessons. The school progress adviser has delivered a session to teachers on planning teaching that is more personalised to the needs of individual students. The school is now part of the new 'Bexley Collaborative', a support group of six special schools within the authority; however, it is too early for its impact to be seen.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bexley.

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**