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31 March 2014

Mrs Helen McEvoy  
Headteacher  
Graham School Science College  
Woodlands Drive  
Scarborough  
North Yorkshire  
YO12 6QW

Dear Mrs McEvoy

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Graham School Science College**

Following my visit to your school on 28 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 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 December 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and two local authority education and development advisers. I scrutinised a range of documentation including lesson observation records, reviews of staff performance, minutes of meetings and the local authority review of governance. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement and action plans were evaluated.

### **Context**

The headteacher joined the school in January 2014. Changes to the governing body have seen the appointment of three new members and a new Chair of the Governing Body. Staff absence increased following the inspection in December 2013. Three school leaders and several other members of staff have been absent for a number of weeks due to ill health. A deputy headteacher has been appointed.

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

The headteacher has acted swiftly and decisively since taking up her post in January and is taking appropriate action to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the December 2013 inspection. Self-evaluation is reflective, honest and accurate. Staff are provided with a crystal clear direction and sense of purpose and the majority are responding positively to the higher expectations set for them. Students' and parents' views about the school's actions are actively sought, listened to and taken into account.

Effective strategies have been implemented to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment data are being used more effectively to track the progress of individual students and year groups and to tackle variations in performance by subject. Senior leaders' monitoring of all aspects of teachers' work is becoming more sharply focused. Professional development activities that include working alongside local authority advisers, are equipping middle leaders with the skills needed to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Teachers and teaching assistants are provided with relevant opportunities to share and develop best practice across the school and through working with colleagues in other schools. As a result, a high number of lesson observations, over 60% of which have been conducted jointly with local authority advisers, confirm that the quality of teaching is improving steadily and students are engaging more in their learning.

The school recently introduced new behaviour management procedures and policies. These focus rightly, on promoting a culture of positive attitudes and behaviour for learning, and the consistent application of the school's 'behaviour pathway' and systems for recording incidents of negative behaviour. While these new systems are yet to be fully embedded, robust monitoring and analysis of behaviour incidents, attendance and punctuality, shows that students' attendance and behaviour in lessons and around the school has improved this term and the use of fixed term and permanent exclusions as sanctions has declined significantly.

Governors receive regular and incisive information that enables them to monitor the work of the school carefully, and to challenge the senior leaders on the rate of progress and impact of actions. The committee structure has been reorganised to align with the areas for improvement identified at the inspection in December 2013 and the key priorities in the school's improvement plan. Governors are committed to making a difference to the school and demonstrate a clear intent to do so through the support they are providing for the headteacher in tackling staff performance issues robustly, and the extensive range of monitoring activities they have engaged in and undertaken to date.

The local authority is playing an important part in the drive for improvement. Strong and highly effective working relationships have been forged with the new headteacher and this has resulted in effectively targeted support. Local authority education and development advisors are being used to good effect to sharpen and improve the quality of leadership and teaching, to conduct rigorous progress checks, support governors and to build the knowledge and expertise staff need to sustain school improvement over the longer term. Support from links established with local schools including coaching and mentoring is also proving effective and is being used judiciously.

School leaders and governors can securely demonstrate improvements as a result of the actions being taken. Nonetheless, leaders are acutely aware that the high rate of staff absence and the necessary reliance on supply staff, is creating a significant barrier to securing rapid improvement.

The actions of the headteacher, governors and local authority to date, demonstrate that the school is able to provide appropriate support to any newly qualified teachers should they be appointed.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint up to four newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire and as below. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ripley

**Her Majesty's Inspector**