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Mrs Lisa Lyon
Headteacher
Mount Gilbert School
Hinkshay Road
Dawley
Telford
TF4 3PP

Dear Mrs Lyon

Special measures monitoring inspection of Mount Gilbert School

Following my visit to your school on 10 June 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 on 5 March 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, I held meetings with you and other school leaders. I also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor. Discussions were held with two representatives of the local authority and a local leader of education (LLE). The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated. In addition, I considered a number of documents including leaders' records from their monitoring of teaching and learning.

Context

Since the inspection in March, two teachers and three members of support staff have left. The school has not yet been successful in recruiting suitable candidates for all of these posts.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You and the senior leadership team have a clear and realistic view of the extent to which the school needs to improve. You are working in partnership with the local authority and LLE to make the necessary changes. Your action plan includes all the areas for improvement which were identified during the inspection in March. It specifies when planned actions will take place and states clearly who is responsible for each area of improvement. You have included information about how each aspect of the plan will be monitored but have not set out clearly enough how you will measure improvement.

Considerable improvements have been made to your systems for setting targets and tracking students' progress. These now include a clear expectation that students will make at least expected progress. You are collecting assessment information more regularly and are meeting more frequently with teachers and teaching assistants to discuss the progress of students in their classes. Where students are not making enough progress, you are working with staff to explore why this is the case and are making changes to teaching strategies and support to tackle underachievement.

Leaders are now making more regular checks on the quality of teaching by visiting lessons and looking at the work in students' books. They are providing clear guidance to teachers on how they can improve their work and are checking that these improvements are being made. Leaders are keeping thorough and detailed records of these checks, and of the required improvements. This is helping you to hold teachers to account for their work. It is also providing leaders with opportunities to identify and share effective practice in teaching.

With guidance from the local authority attached adviser, you have introduced a new marking policy. Senior leaders have provided training for teachers in how to mark more effectively by identifying and following up errors and misconceptions, and by giving clear guidance to students about how they can improve their work. Evidence from your regular checks on the work in students' books indicates recent improvements, with all work now marked and more constructive comments from teachers. Some students are beginning to respond to teachers' comments and improve their work as a result.

Evidence from your monitoring records indicates that behaviour is starting to improve. Senior leaders are working with staff to ensure that behaviour is managed consistently, using the school's agreed system of rewards and sanctions. Students still spend too much time out of lessons, although your monitoring indicates that this is beginning to improve. All incidents of poor behaviour are recorded but the current system does not allow for effective analysis of these incidents. You have recognised

this and intend to introduce a new system from September which will allow you to look for patterns or common triggers and to evaluate the success of different behaviour management strategies. The occasions when staff have to intervene physically to keep students safe are now all recorded appropriately. The number of physical interventions has reduced. The number of exclusions has also reduced slightly although you recognise that there is still a great deal to be done. With this in mind, you have appointed an inclusion coordinator who will join the school in July. This member of staff will work with students at risk of exclusion and will focus on helping them to recognise and manage their emotions and reactions.

You are renewing your efforts to promote and reward good attendance and are ensuring that all staff recognise their responsibilities in this area. The attendance officer is working closely with a local authority educational welfare officer to ensure that absences are followed up rigorously. However, this work has not yet had any measurable impact and attendance remains well below the national average.

You and other leaders are planning considerable changes to the curriculum from September, in order to ensure that all students study courses which meet their learning needs and enable them to work towards challenging goals and appropriate qualifications.

Leaders have improved their systems and procedures for checking on the well-being and progress of students attending work-based learning placements. Appropriate checks are now made and recorded for each establishment. Expectations are made clear and information on students' progress is collected regularly. A leader from Mount Gilbert visits each provider at least once every half term.

Leaders, governors and the local authority all recognise the importance of recruiting high quality staff to fill the current vacancies for both teaching and support staff. While you have made some successful appointments, other key posts have had to be re-advertised. The local authority, governors and the LLE are working with you in order to explore different options for staffing and recruitment.

The external review of governance has been started, and the second and final part of this process is due to be completed by the local authority very soon. The governing body should use the report from this review to help develop its members' knowledge and skills, and to improve the way its meetings are organised and recorded. Further work is needed to ensure that pupil premium funding is clearly identified and appropriately spent on helping eligible students.

The local authority is providing good support to this school. Governors and leaders say that it knows the school well. Since the inspection representatives of the local

authority have provided a broad range of training and advice for staff and governors. For example, the attached adviser has worked with leaders to help them review their guidance for teachers on marking. He has regularly attended meetings of the leadership team to provide advice and support. He also continues to work with individual teachers to help them improve their work. Local authority representatives meet regularly with senior leaders and governors to check that enough progress is being made in tackling the necessary improvements.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel
Her Majesty's Inspector