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Rick Tracey  
Headteacher  
Beacon Hill School  
Stone Lodge Lane West  
Ipswich  
IP2 9HW

Dear Mr Tracey

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Beacon Hill School**

Following my visit to your school on 16–17 July 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed only after consultation with HMI.

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 Executive Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk.

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Make the quality of teaching consistently good so pupils make better progress, particularly in Key Stage 3 and in English, by:
  - improving teachers' subject-specific knowledge and skills, particularly in English
  - making sure that teachers provide enough opportunities for pupils to reinforce their learning and so are able to retain what they have learnt
  - keeping pupils actively involved in learning throughout each lesson
  - giving all staff the training they need to use accurate assessment information effectively in planning lesson activities that challenge pupils at the right level of difficulty
  - making sure that all pupils know and understand what they are capable of achieving in English and mathematics.
- Improve how the school is led and managed by making sure that:
  - the leadership and management of safeguarding are rigorous, all required policies and procedures are fully up to date, and all staff are fully trained in safeguarding procedures
  - capacity for future improvement is secured by strengthening the procedures for accountability
  - all leaders can carry out lesson observations effectively and accurately, and can analyse and interpret data on pupils' progress to identify areas for improvement
  - further training is provided to allow leaders to carry out their roles effectively.
- Work closely with parents and carers to make sure that all pupils attend regularly and to reduce the need for temporary exclusions.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 16–17 July 2014**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and all members of the senior leadership team. The inspector also met with three subject leaders and a group of teaching assistants. The inspector spoke to a larger number of parents who attended Sports Day and the parents' consultation evening.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the executive headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have been appointed to these positions on a permanent basis. An assistant headteacher has been appointed to strengthen the leadership team. The school is currently in the process of converting to an academy, to take effect as soon as possible in the next academic year.

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

Improvement in pupils' achievement and progress has been consolidated in a range of areas. At Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in their spelling and most pupils recognise and shape letters and words correctly. A few pupils can now form full sentences. During this inspection, the youngest pupils were observed making good use of numbers in a food technology lesson. Most Key Stage 2 pupils are meeting or exceeding their targets, but reading and writing skills require further improvement. Pupils are developing their practical skills well. They make good use of equipment such as glue and scissors.

Progress of older pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 is still uneven across subjects. In English, progress in reading is not rapid enough because effective strategies are not in place to teach reading and to ensure that pupils read with an adult frequently – ideally, daily. There are still too few opportunities to write longer pieces or work.

Good achievement was seen during this visit in information and communication technology (ICT) and science. The Art Exhibition in Ipswich Town Hall shows very good achievement in art. The three pupils entered for GCSE art are predicted to achieve a pass. Almost all pupils are on track to pass entry-level accreditations in a range of subjects. The school makes a great deal of effort to ensure that the Year 11 pupils leave Beacon Hill School with suitable skills and qualifications. All pupils have a place at a local college. However, parents shared their serious concerns with the inspector about post-16 courses not meeting their child's option choices. Parents are concerned that the suggested timetable is not appropriate for young people with moderate or severe learning needs.

## **The quality of teaching**

For the majority of pupils, good learning is becoming the norm. Lessons usually get off to a brisk start, and have a clear direction. Pupils are now being taught at a level more suitable to their capabilities as a result of improved teaching, better assessment and a more relevant curriculum. The quality and quantity of work in pupils' books and folders have continued to improve, showing that learning is being reinforced through practical and problem-solving tasks. In the majority of sessions observed, including the enrichment activities (gardening, cycling and drama), pupils covered a good amount of work. Their achievements relate closely to the expectations that staff have of them. In lessons where high expectations are established, and where pupils remain in the classroom for all or most of the lesson, pupils make reasonable, and sometimes good, progress. An outstanding example of high expectation leading to accelerated progress was observed in science: pupils recalled key vocabulary and explained clearly how animals had adapted to their environment; some pupils started to understand differences and similarities in people's DNA. This was achieved through the teacher's expert questioning, his specific knowledge of pupils' capabilities and effective use of exciting visual resources.

Most teachers and teaching assistants adapt well to incidents where pupils leave the lesson for a period of time, quickly refocusing them on their learning as soon as they return. In some instances, however, disruption by older pupils affects the learning of the younger ones. This is particularly the case when teachers and teaching assistants are not proactive enough to predict and avoid poor behaviour. At various points during this inspection, pupils showed pride in their work, such as in design technology and physical education.

Teachers now track pupils' achievements more closely and use this information to plan lessons more effectively. Marking is improving and, in the best marking, teachers comment on what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve. There is more to do, however, to ensure that positive feedback is consistently recorded on the work so that all pupils are clear about the next steps they need to take to improve, particularly in English. Teaching assistants have good relationships with pupils but not all are confident to review pupils' progress and focus on their learning. This is because communication with the class teacher is insufficiently planned and too infrequent.

There are ambitious plans to continue to improve the learning environment, including a better library, a remodelled primary area and a new central location for behaviour support so that pupils' behavioural and emotional needs are addressed in a more positive way. There are display boards in all classrooms and the corridors. These largely contain pupils' work and are respected by the pupils.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Over the two days of this inspection, the vast majority of pupils arrived at their lessons on time and remained in the classroom for the duration. Behaviour of the youngest pupils is now good. The first day of this inspection was Sports Day for Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils. Their behaviour was exemplary. A positive and competitive team spirit prevailed, with all pupils encouraging each other to do their best.

In lessons, pupils showed enthusiasm for what they were learning and were thrilled with their end product, such as their goody bag or laminated table mat. The inspector, joined by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, observed pupils showing good levels of perseverance when their work was challenging. In a well-managed physical education lesson, for example, pupils interacted positively with the staff and each other. One pupil, who did not want to engage, was not allowed to disrupt the flow of the learning.

Most teachers are increasingly skilled at responding to older pupils' behavioural difficulties in a constructive way. There are instances, however, when staff are not focusing closely enough on learning rather than on behaviour; learning is then allowed to drift to the pupils' own agenda. The school's records indicate that the use of exclusion has not reduced since September, and the number of fixed-term exclusions is high. Leaders recognise that the current reward and sanctions system is not effective enough. The newly appointed assistant headteacher has been given the specific responsibility for radical and sensible changes to improve it.

Attendance continues to improve and, for the large majority of pupils, it is over 90%. The school works closely with parents and carers to address the persistent absence of a small number of pupils, and overall attendance is now just below the national average.

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

The headteacher and the deputy headteacher maintain a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning at the same time as managing a range of challenging issues related to safeguarding and staffing. As a result of this strong focus on improvement, staff are clear about what is expected of them and the school is improving. Senior leaders carry out a range of lesson observations, with and without the support of the local authority, and their evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning are accurate. Leaders also carry out other monitoring activities, such as short visits to classrooms, scrutiny of pupils' work and checking the management of pupils' behaviour. Although these activities give them a range of useful information, this is not brought together and analysed sufficiently to form a clear picture of the training and development needed by each staff member, including teaching assistants, to improve teaching and learning further. From September 2014, subject leaders in English, mathematics and science will have

dedicated monitoring time to improve the quality of provision in their respective areas of responsibility. Some subject leaders require specific guidance to make productive use of this time.

A clear tracking system now gives a useful overview of the progress made by each pupil across all key stages. Where pupils are not on track to meet their targets, intervention plans are put in place, such as targeted teaching in small groups and one-to-one support. Data shows that 86% of pupils supported through pupil premium funding achieved or exceeded expectations, while 77% of all pupils did so. Subject leaders are increasingly getting to grips with the assessment system and the recording of data. Moderation of work with other schools and support from local authority advisers are improving the accuracy of their assessments.

The information about behaviour and attendance is analysed well. Teaching assistants are highly committed and effective in ensuring the welfare and safety of each pupil. Parents told the inspector that they were very pleased with the quality of the end-of-year reports. They also said that the relationship of the school with the whole community is 'so totally and positively different'. This inspection confirms that reports to parents provide a comprehensive summary of each pupil's academic achievement, behaviour and personal development. The school's links with the local community are good. A member of the public wrote an unsolicited note to the school complimenting the staff and pupils for their excellent behaviour on a recent train journey to Woodbridge.

The governing body continues to be well organised and well informed. As reported in the previous monitoring inspection, all safeguarding requirements are met. Governors have an in-depth knowledge of the school and make useful observations, which are assisting leaders in driving improvements. In meetings, they ask probing questions about the progress that pupils are making. The staff who met with the inspector remarked on the determination, dedication and knowledge of the Executive Chair of the Governing Body and other governors. The Executive Chair acknowledges that transition to academy status requires careful handling. Most staff see this as an opportunity but some are anxious about the impact this may have on their own professional future. In the main, parents and staff are positive about these developments and see the potential for increasing the capacity of the school to succeed.

## **External support**

As noted in the previous monitoring report, support from the local authority is wide ranging and staff make good use of their links with other schools, including an outstanding school. Support from the mathematics, science and the primary advisers continues to be effective. In English, despite some improvement, there is more to do to ensure that high quality in teaching and assessment is embedded across the whole school, particularly when local authority support comes to an end. The local authority conducts thorough reviews of the school's progress, and joint observations

of teaching are developing the monitoring skills of senior leaders. The School Accountability Group, renamed School Improvement Board (SIB) and chaired by the local authority, has refreshed its core purpose. Members of the SIB continue to meet frequently to discuss the school's work with senior leaders and governors. They are closely involved in the discussions about future plans for the school.