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21 November 2014

Alison Tilbrook  
Principal  
IES Breckland  
Crown Street  
Brandon  
IP27 0NJ

Dear Mrs Tilbrook

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of IES Breckland**

Following my visit with Lynn Lowery, Additional Inspector, to your school on 19–20 November 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 January 2014. 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.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 Suffolk.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Moodie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:  
[CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk)
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [[open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk)] - for academies, free schools, UTCs and studio schools
- The lead and team inspectors.

## **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2014**

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - making sure that students are taught by a permanent group of high quality teachers
  - acting with determination to eradicate inadequate teaching
  - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and plan their lessons so that all students, and especially the most able, are fully stretched
  - sharing the best teaching practice that exists in the school more widely
  - focusing on the progress that students make when evaluating teaching rather than on the teaching activities
  - improving the consistency and rigour of homework and teachers' marking
  - improving assessment and the use of data to check on the impact of teaching.
  
- Raise students' achievement in all subjects and key stages by:
  - ensuring students practise skills in numeracy and literacy in lessons other than English and mathematics
  - tackling the gaps in attainment between boys and girls in English and mathematics
  - tackling students' poor behaviour by making sure that teachers manage behaviour consistently across the school
  - ensuring that students understand what they need to do to improve their work
  - making sure the curriculum meets the needs of all students.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - simplifying the way that school leaders check on performance so that school improvement plans are based on more accurate information
  - making sure that teaching, learning, marking and homework are monitored properly by subject leaders
  - providing additional training for governors, especially in using data to evaluate school performance
  - ensuring that performance management holds teachers to account for the success of their students.
  
- Urgently tackle weaknesses in safeguarding and recruitment procedures.
  
- Urgently fill vacant management and teaching posts.

An external review of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 19–20 November 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met the Principal, Assistant Principal, subjects leaders, six governors, the Chair of SABRES (the educational trust) and a representative of IES (the educational provider appointed by SABRES). They visited lessons, and met with students to discuss their work and how the school has improved recently.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring visit, two teachers have left the school and have been replaced. Several teachers have been promoted to leadership roles or head of faculties.

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

The quality of students' work has improved since the previous visit. School assessments in Key Stage 4 show that the proportion of students on track to gain five A\* to C (including mathematics and English) at GCSE level is rising. The school's current predicted figure is 47%. This is reliant on all students currently assessed at a D grade improving to C grade in time for the examinations in the summer of 2015. At present, the proportion of students assessed at a D grade in Year 11 is approximately 20% in both English and mathematics.

The school has focused on ensuring that achievement rapidly improves in Key Stage 4. Standards in Year 11 are rising much more quickly than in other year groups. In Years 8 and 9, for example, too many are making less than expected progress: in Year 8, over 40% of students are not making as much progress as they should in English and mathematics. In Year 9, 20% are in the same situation in mathematics but the figure in English is almost 60%.

Too many students, and especially boys, make basic errors in their writing and do not present their work well. A growing number of teachers are tackling these errors when they are marking but some do not. This has a clear impact on the quality of work and how well it is presented. Within the same subject, in the same year group, there are significant differences in the expectations that teachers have. This leads to some work which is very well presented, with clear pride. In contrast, in classes where teachers do not expect enough, students' work is untidy and is littered with careless mistakes. Boys' work often shows less care or pride than that of girls in the same class.

The school is not tackling the source of the basic errors in writing rigorously enough. Lessons to improve standards in the use of grammar and punctuation are not

focused well enough on improving these basic skills. These lessons are not providing students with the skills that they need to leave the school well equipped to write to an acceptable standard and spell common words correctly and with confidence.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching has improved. In the majority of classrooms, expectations of what students can achieve have risen and more progress is evident in students' work. Further improvement is needed, however, because some of the teaching is not good enough. A few teachers tolerate or ignore low-level disruption and accept poor-quality work. Students understand that, with these teachers, they simply do not need to try very hard.

The quality of marking and feedback has been a focus for all teachers and has improved. During the previous monitoring visit, students' work was poorly marked in many classes. Some teachers were not marking students' work at all and had little idea of how well they were doing. This has now changed and teachers have a better understanding of students' progress. This term, leaders have introduced a 'find and fix' approach to marking. This involves teachers clearly telling students what they are doing well and exactly what they need to do in order to improve. Some teachers are doing this more effectively than others. For example, in one geography lesson, students had very clear feedback about how they need to improve their geographical skills. Similarly, in a mathematics lesson, students were instructed to demonstrate that they could solve a problem using a strategy that they had learned some time ago, helping to reinforce their understanding. In these instances, students said that this was very useful as it made them focus on what they needed to do as an individual. This way of marking is ineffective in some classes, where students are simply prompted to 'try harder'. In response, students are simply writing that they will try harder but there is little evidence of this in their work.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' behaviour has improved since the previous monitoring visit. Low-level disruption is less common and students are positive about the revised behaviour code. They are keen to earn 'merits' and understand that the level of expectation about their behaviour has risen. Where low-level disruption is still occurring, teachers' expectations are too low. For example, in a science lesson, students chatted with one another for long periods of time and achieved too little. This is in contrast with another science lesson where students in the same year group all worked hard to meet the teacher's high expectations. They were keen to show how quickly they were learning and presented their work with pride. Positive attitudes to learning were equally evident in practical lessons such as drama and resistant materials. In these lessons, the teacher had no need to waste time in managing behaviour.

The school monitors attendance and punctuality effectively. Current rates of attendance are in line with the national average.

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

The senior leadership team has worked effectively to bring about improvements in teaching and raise achievement. The coaching and training that senior leaders have provided have raised the quality of teaching in many classes. Senior leaders acknowledge that there is more to be done in this area. Their support is now being very specifically focused on the areas where teaching has not yet improved sufficiently.

Leadership across the school has been strengthened by the appointment of more heads of departments. These positions have been filled on a permanent basis and this means that the staffing structure is now much more stable than has been the case in the recent past. Senior leaders are in the process of setting up systems to ensure that heads of department are accountable for the performance in their subjects.

Assessment data are now gathered and analysed in a much more systematic way. Leaders are increasingly aware of where improvements are most urgently needed. Interventions and additional support to raise achievement are now being more precisely targeted at individual and groups of students who have similar needs. Extra lessons during half-term were provided to help Year 11 students to catch up from previous underachievement. These were well attended and students were positive about their impact. However, assessment in Key Stage 3 is not as well developed. Although leaders are gathering the data in Years 7 and 8, the accuracy of teachers' assessments, especially in English, is inconsistent. Some teachers have developed very good skills in the assessment of English since the previous monitoring visit. There are others, however, where more training is needed because their assessments are overly generous.

The school's improvement plan continues to set a clear direction for improvement. It has changed in response to the school's recent improvement and is more focused on how specific subjects and individual teachers can improve. Leaders have made good use of external advisers, including those from Suffolk local authority, to evaluate their progress and provide support and guidance. Consultants with expertise in specific subjects have been deployed to moderate the predictions that teachers are making for GCSE grades. This has been very useful and has identified that many teachers are accurately assessing students' abilities. It has also shone a light on those subjects where assessment is inaccurate and predictions are unreliable. Where these weaknesses have been exposed, senior leaders have been quick to provide support and training.

The governing body is providing leaders with appropriate levels of challenge and support. Weekly meetings between the Chair of the Governing Body and the Principal are helping governors to tailor their monitoring activities and keep up with the school's development. Working parties focusing on specific aspects of the school's work are making visits and working alongside leaders and teachers to gather first-hand information about progress. Governors are now receiving much clearer information from school leaders and are better placed to ask questions and hold them to account for students' achievement.

### **External support**

The educational provider for the school (IES) is working closely with school leaders to support improvements. The strategy has altered since the previous inspection and is now centred around improving the long-term quality of teaching in the school. IES is coordinating a coaching initiative with the school, primarily through the appointment of a teaching and learning coach, supported by visiting high-quality English teachers from IES Sweden. It is too early to see the impact of this work. In addition to IES support, the school has worked with a variety of independent consultants and advisers to make use of their expertise. This has had a positive impact and has provided a useful and objective evaluation of the school's work.