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28 November 2014

Mr Bradley Taylor  
The Interim Headteacher  
Maplewood School  
Faulkner Way  
High Wycombe  
HP13 5HB

Dear Mr Taylor

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Maplewood School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 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 December 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.

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

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve teaching to good or better by making sure that:
  - activities are well matched to individual pupils' abilities and enable teachers to make accurate assessments of pupils' progress in each lesson
  - behaviour for learning improves because all pupils are actively engaged in individually designed activities for a greater proportion of the time in lessons
  - activities are appropriately planned so all pupils make the best progress they can.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by making sure that:
  - leaders introduce robust and systematic methods for assessing pupils' levels of attainment, for setting challenging but realistic targets and for tracking pupils' progress and using this information to drive school improvement
  - regular checks of teachers' performance in the classroom are done through a comprehensive range of activities including an evaluation of improvements in pupils' progress
  - there are opportunities for the best practice that exists in the school to be shared
  - the planning for what is taught and when, engages pupils' interests and develops a wide range of skills, particularly in the sixth form.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 27 November 2014**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative of Buckinghamshire Learning Trust which has been commissioned by the local authority to provide school improvement services. The inspector observed six lessons which were all conducted jointly with senior leaders.

### **Context**

The interim headteacher started at the school on 1 September 2014 following the retirement of the previous headteacher. Buckinghamshire Learning Trust, on behalf of the local authority, removed the governing body in August 2014 and replaced it with an interim executive board (IEB). Two teachers have joined the school since the last monitoring inspection and two teaching assistants have left.

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

Pupils' learning is more visible in classrooms and around the school. Vibrant and imaginative displays of a range of pupils' work demonstrate that pupils are beginning to make better progress. However, this improvement is at an early stage and variable across different classes. In some classes the rate of improvement is faster because teaching is improving at a more rapid rate.

Teachers' assessments of pupils' achievement are becoming more accurate and regular. Teachers and teaching assistants measure pupils' progress daily, weekly and over time. Teachers now have more regular, reliable information about pupils' progress. Pupils' achievement is improving most quickly when teachers and teaching assistants use this information to meet pupils' individual needs effectively in every lesson.

Teachers now set appropriately ambitious targets for pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants have higher expectations about what pupils can and will achieve during lessons and over time. Pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding and pupils from minority ethnic groups make at least the same progress as other pupils, and often better.

### **The quality of teaching**

All teachers are now planning lessons in a more systematic and effective way. Teaching is improving as a result, but at a variable rate. Some teaching still requires improvement. In the best lessons, teachers constantly give pupils valuable feedback about how well they are doing to help pupils achieve their personal targets and make sure that all teaching assistants do the same. In these lessons, teachers and teaching assistants question pupils effectively to help pupils think for themselves and

make their own decisions. Additionally, the most effective teaching focuses on key language to develop pupils' understanding. There is a growing emphasis in lessons on improving pupils' literacy skills.

These elements of the strongest teaching, however, are inconsistent across the school. Some pupils are occasionally left too long with nothing to do. Not all teachers yet ensure that teaching assistants use the right, focused language in lessons or give enough effective feedback to pupils. This slows some pupils' progress.

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

Pupils appear happy at school. They are generally attentive, listen well and want to learn. Pupils tend to lose concentration when teaching is weaker. Pupils' attendance is good overall, but this varies widely from pupil to pupil. While some pupils attend all of the time, others miss school through illness or because they need extended periods of medical treatment.

Staff care for pupils greatly. Pupils are kept safe. Any challenging behaviour is dealt with well because staff have detailed knowledge of individual pupils' issues and put the right strategies in place to address them. Consequently, there are few incidents of poor behaviour and these involve a very small minority of pupils known to have specific behavioural problems.

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

The interim headteacher, supported well by the deputy headteacher, has wasted no time in making urgent improvements. His track record of highly successful leadership is paying dividends. His substantive post is at a nearby special school, Chiltern Gate School, which was judged good in June 2014 after having required special measures. He is putting the many skills and experiences he learned in achieving this to good use.

Senior leaders accurately monitor the quality of teaching very regularly and provide teachers with high quality feedback. This advice is always followed up to make sure teachers are making necessary improvements. A comprehensive process for assessing and tracking pupils' progress is now in place. Leaders hold teachers and teaching assistants more sharply to account. Teachers receive appropriate training every week and increasingly the best practice in the school is shared. Leaders have clearly set the expectation that only good teaching is good enough and that anything less will not be tolerated. Senior leaders are providing effective support for teaching that requires improvement. The school's improvement plan is detailed, focused and fully supports senior leaders in making improvements.

Subject leaders' roles are underdeveloped. Subject leaders have yet to play any prominent or meaningful role in leading improvement. Senior leaders have plans in place to address this.

The relatively new IEB has made a very good start because of the high calibre of its members and because the IEB is strongly led. Members have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They provide stiff challenge to school leaders, but also give good quality support. They have a clear role in evaluating improvements and rightly visit the school regularly.

### **External support**

Buckinghamshire Learning Trust has provided effective support for the school on behalf of the local authority. Most importantly, they brokered the appointment of the interim headteacher and replaced the governing body with the IEB. Officers visit the school frequently to monitor the school's progress closely. They offer good quality advice and challenge which are captured clearly in well-written notes of visits. Consequent improvements include better tracking of pupils' achievement and more accurate assessments by teachers of pupils' progress. An external consultant continues to visit the school once a week to provide support for leaders, particularly to improve the quality of teaching. Valuable links with The Milestone School continue to prosper.