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12 December 2014

Mrs J Collins  
Headteacher  
Lindsworth School  
Monyhull Hall Road  
Kings Norton  
Birmingham  
B30 3QA

Dear Mrs Collins

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

Following my visit with Peter Humphries, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Karen Gannon, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 10–11 December 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 March 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.

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 Birmingham.

Yours sincerely  
Sue Morris-King  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement by:
  - eradicating the pockets of inadequate teaching
  - tackling staffing issues to enable students to have the maximum continuity in their learning
  - ensuring that all staff, including teaching assistants and mentors, have equally high expectations of what students can achieve and communicate these clearly in each lesson
  - helping students to develop, and then use, their literacy skills in every lesson, not just in English lessons
  - deciding on what is required from teachers' marking and ensuring that all teachers implement this consistently
  - making sure that students' progress is assessed regularly and consistently across all subject areas.
  
- Improve behaviour by:
  - ensuring that all staff have consistently high expectations of students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in every lesson and quickly challenge poor behaviour so it does not deteriorate
  - giving staff training and support to manage the more complex and challenging behaviours that some students present.
  
- Improve attendance by:
  - ensuring that the attendance of all students is accurately recorded
  - improving the process for recording and reporting the attendance of students at alternative provision
  - reducing the use of part-time timetables
  - clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all staff responsible for attendance and ensuring that these are carried out effectively.
  
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - the headteacher and senior and middle leaders gain a clear overview of where the strengths and weaknesses in teaching lie and take action accordingly
  - every member of staff's roles and responsibilities are clear and the effectiveness with which they carry these out are properly monitored
  - all the actions that are being taken to improve the school's work are properly evaluated to assess their impact and the evaluation is used to plan the next steps

- governors take full account of this evaluation and use this to provide an appropriate level of challenge as well as support
- the school and the local authority work closely together to plan how to manage the change in numbers on roll and the related budget deficit efficiently and effectively, in particular so the school is appropriately staffed to enable students to make progress.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 10-11 December**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, senior leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and two other IEB members, and two representatives from the local authority. Informal discussions were held with students during the inspection.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection eight teachers and four support staff have left the school. Six teachers have joined on a temporary basis this term. Three teaching assistants have also joined. There are currently 112 students on roll.

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

The attainment of Year 11 students in 2014, although well below national averages, was slightly better than in 2013. In 2013 only a third of students gained any GCSE qualifications. In contrast, in 2014 over half the students gained at least one GCSE, and a fifth gained four. Around a third of students gained a GCSE in mathematics and nearly half did so in English. Of those students who did not gain any GCSEs, some gained other qualifications. However five students left with no qualifications. The progress of Year 11 students who attended well accelerated during the last year of their education.

During the week of the monitoring inspection, students were sitting a range of mock examinations. Their response to these varied: while some coped reasonably well, others did not concentrate for long enough or became frustrated when they could not answer questions. The school is keenly aware of the need to prepare students more systematically for taking examinations this academic year so that they tackle the papers with more resilience and confidence.

In lessons, where students attend reasonably well and are taught well, they are making steady progress. Gaps or discontinuity in staffing continue to adversely affect progress in some classes. Older students sometimes protest about the increased demands being placed on them to work at a good pace, but these demands are having a positive effect on their progress. The progress of students who attend regularly is noticeably better than those who frequently miss school. Many students have low levels of literacy which continue to be a barrier to their learning across the curriculum.

## **The quality of teaching**

Staff's expectations of what students can and should achieve have begun to rise. In the lessons observed during the inspection, teachers frequently talked to students about the level of their work, the examinations they were about to take, or the importance of working precisely. The books and folders of those students who attend regularly have a reasonable and sometimes good amount of work in them. Students are taking more care with their presentation and are more willing to work throughout the lesson. Some staff use simple but effective methods to encourage good presentation, such as covering books with laminate to prevent graffiti.

Many staff, including support staff, are becoming increasingly skilled at ensuring that students focus on their learning throughout each lesson. Staff talk frequently about the need for students to 'engage' and students know what this means. Support staff sit next to students in order to help them. Pastoral staff also support effectively in the classroom where necessary.

Some teachers plan their lessons very effectively to ensure that students, particularly those in Key Stage 4, are able to catch up with their work if they miss lessons due to absence. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, each student was reading a different chapter of John Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men' and answering a different set of questions to help them to understand the text. This attention to detail is not consistent across the school.

There are a number of short-term and supply staff working in the school. Some who have been at the school for several weeks are planning work carefully to meet the needs of their classes. However, where staff are teaching subjects in which they are not specialists, or where they have only just joined the school, they are not always being given appropriate work to do with their classes, or guidance about what to teach them. This is leading to too much low level or repeated work.

Marking is too variable. There are some good examples of marking. For example in a cookery lesson the teacher gave very clear feedback about exactly what the students needed to do in order to improve their work. Similar examples were seen in English and history. Weaker marking is cursory and does not help students to improve their work.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour is improving. Behaviour around the school and in lessons during the two days of the inspection was largely calm. Students are assisted by clear routines and appropriate supervision at the start of the day, between lessons and at break and lunchtime.

The start to the day is orderly and positive. Students are greeted when they arrive, and eat breakfast with staff before going to their lessons. Students understand what is expected of them in lessons and around the school and most are making good efforts to comply. Some students continue to test the boundaries of what they can and cannot do, particularly with newer staff; for example they swear or tease other students when they know they should not. However this kind of behaviour is now dealt with more firmly and consistently, often to good effect.

The pastoral team have clearly defined roles and are carefully deployed to where they are most needed in each lesson in order to help students and staff. Physical intervention is not used often. Around a third of students have been excluded for a fixed period this term. However, most of these have only been excluded once. The school has worked hard to ensure that where exclusion is used it is an effective sanction. Leaders have involved parents and carers, and invite the police to meetings with students and families where appropriate.

The majority of staff now dress professionally for school, which sets a good example to the students. This is not yet consistent.

Attendance remains very low, but has improved by eight percentage points this term to 66%. There is a considerable range of attendance underlying this overall figure. A small but significant number of students attend less than 20% of the time. However, about a quarter of the students across the school have attended between 90% and 100% of this term. Attendance in Years 7 and 8 this term is nearly 90%.

The school has reduced the number of students who are on part-time timetables but the number remains too high. Some of these students attend alternative provision but only for part of the week.

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

The headteacher is systematically tackling many of the weaknesses in the school. In this, she is being very well supported by the assistant headteachers and by many of the staff. She has completed a comprehensive staffing restructure which is ready to be in place by January. In doing so, she has thought carefully about the need to bring the pastoral and learning aspects of support roles together, as well as the need to meet budgetary and teaching needs. Senior leaders have worked very hard to try to recruit teachers and middle leaders, but with limited success. There are still seven unfilled teaching posts for January. This is limiting the pace at which teaching can improve.

Procedures for monitoring attendance have improved considerably. Attendance is now recorded accurately. The attendance team have clearly defined roles and are linked to year groups, which allows them to form good relationships with parents and carers. Non-attendance is challenged on a daily basis and a range of appropriate

procedures are in place for when students miss school over a period of time. The school know if students who attend alternative provision are absent, and contacts parents and carers accordingly. These improvements have had a positive impact on students' attendance this term.

The capacity to manage behaviour has been improved by the addition of a lead pastoral manager. Alongside the assistant headteacher who leads this area, he is able to ensure that pastoral staff are effective. Behaviour is analysed comprehensively, although there is not enough clarity about different types of 'serious' incident to discern patterns and trends.

The quality of teaching is monitored thoroughly, using evidence from assessment information, observations, learning walks and work scrutinies. Actions are targeted as necessary and this has had a clear impact on the quality of teaching in some areas. Leaders recognise that not enough attention is paid to how well teachers are developing students' literacy skills, or how literacy is marked. The school does not know enough about the quality of teaching at alternative provision placements or how well the students are progressing with their courses.

The IEB is now fully established and meets on a monthly basis. Members have a realistic knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are making good use of their own skills to support and challenge the school. One IEB member's work to help the school to improve the procedures for monitoring attendance has been particularly effective.

### **External support**

The local authority is providing a range of suitable support for the school, which is responsive to the school's needs. Close working between the school and the authority's special educational needs team is helping to ensure that students are placed in the school appropriately and transitions are smooth. Good support has been provided to assist the staffing restructure. In addition, the school is benefiting from the support of the police, for example to emphasise to students and families the seriousness of some behaviours and to help to keep students safe.