

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus
Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 0121 679 9158
Direct email: rachel.dayan@serco.com

23 January 2015

Mrs Annemari Ottridge
Headteacher
Lonsdale School
Brittain Way
Stevenage
SG2 8UT

Dear Mrs Ottridge

Special measures monitoring inspection of Lonsdale School

Following my visit to your school on 22–23 January 2015, 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 in October 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, members of the senior leadership team, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. Together we briefly visited all classrooms. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including performance review records, supervision notes and minutes of meetings. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Lonsdale school shares a building with the residential provision. Many students attend the school as well as the residential provision. This inspection related to the education provision. However, there are a number of overarching aspects of safeguarding which cover both. For example, the same senior leadership team have responsibility for both the residential and the school provision, and the school and

residential provision share staff. Therefore, the single central record covers both the school and the residential staff. In addition, the school's policies frequently relate to both aspects of provision.

Since the last inspection, three senior leaders have left the school. Two existing members of school staff have been appointed temporarily as assistant headteachers for a period of two terms. You have secured the secondment of a deputy headteacher from the adjoining mainstream secondary school until July 2015. An interim head of residence has also been appointed for two terms. The school has increased the number of support staff as a result of detailed risk assessments.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Current leaders, including governors, have an enthusiastic and determined attitude to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. This is supporting staff in their drive and commitment to improve. Many of the actions taken are already starting to have a positive impact.

In a short time, you have introduced systems to ensure the safeguarding of pupils. All staff are checked as required by law, have received child protection training, training in de-escalation strategies and, where appropriate, physical intervention training. The recording of interventions is now more systematic. Staff have a clear understanding of your expectations of reporting and you are monitoring the recording of serious incidents to ensure they are completed appropriately. As yet, there is no analysis of these incidents. As a result, you are not able to understand what underlies these incidents or identify actions to reduce their occurrence.

Staff feel valued and have confidence in your vision to improve provision for pupils and, therefore, to improve pupils' progress. You have analysed the difficulties faced by the school and developed an accurate understanding of barriers to improvement. You are acting with a strong sense of urgency to reduce these. New, more decisive approaches to developing teaching and learning include an improved approach to performance management. This includes all staff who now have clear targets for their work.

You have quickly introduced a programme of senior leadership meetings which are ensuring regular review of the development plan as well as the impact of the actions you are taking. You are ensuring that communication between all areas of the school is strong and that channels of communication remain open. For example, meeting notes from whole-school briefings are easily accessible to staff who could not attend the meeting. Consequently, everyone knows what is expected of them. Minutes of these meetings show that safeguarding is now given a high priority and pupil-related issues, such as communication development, are better understood by all staff.

A training plan, which ensures professional development is available to all staff, has been established, along with a system to monitor the impact of training. The high attendance rates of staff at events shows their commitment and reflects their understanding that this is helping them to develop good practice.

The school and local authority action plans address appropriately all the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The plans clearly state who is responsible for leading actions and the expected outcomes. However, the planned impact on pupils' achievement and how this will be measured is less clearly defined. A review of governance is underway.

The local authority is providing a good level of support and challenge. Their current plan of support is ensuring that you are able to take timely and specific actions to improve the school.

The pace of change has been rapid; this means that sometimes policies have not been updated to reflect the changes made to practice. For example, the safer recruitment practices within the school are stronger but the safer recruitment policy is out of date.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The school's improvement 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 Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mary Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Chair of the Governing Body
cc. Local authority
cc. The Secretary of State