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Jackie Cooper
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Cooper

Special measures monitoring inspection of William Allitt School

Following my visit with Zarina Connolly, Her Majesty's Inspector, and John Taylor, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4–5 February 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 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 April 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 appoint up to two newly qualified teachers in mathematics 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser
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)
- The Secretary of State

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching, in order to accelerate progress and raise standards across the school, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what all students, and particularly the most able, can achieve
 - teachers check regularly on students' progress and adapt their teaching as necessary to ensure that all students are challenged appropriately by the work they are set
 - marking and feedback are consistently helpful in moving students up to the next level of attainment
 - teachers check that students have acted on the guidance they are given through marking
 - all low-level disruptive behaviour is eliminated from lessons
 - teachers across all subjects develop students' literacy skills by regularly correcting any spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes.

- Improve achievement in English and mathematics, particularly that of boys, students supported by the pupil premium and the most-able students, by:
 - providing more challenging work in all subjects for the most-able students
 - identifying early any students whose reading is weak and providing more frequent and effective support so that they can catch up with their peers
 - checking students' progress in writing more frequently, and providing more opportunities for students to develop their skills by writing at length in other subjects
 - giving greater attention in mathematics to the development of students' key skills in calculation and problem-solving
 - ensuring that disabled students and those who have special educational needs, who are not covered by the enhanced provision offered by the school, make the same good progress as those who are.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - making leaders', including subject leaders', evaluations of the school's and their own effectiveness more rigorous
 - reviewing the use of early entry for GCSE
 - providing better support for students whose main language is not English
 - raising expectations by making all students' targets more challenging throughout the school
 - ensuring that subject leaders' plans give greater emphasis to improving the progress made by different groups of students

- ensuring that leaders check more frequently on the impact of the measures being taken to bring about improvement.

An external review of governance has taken place fairly recently, therefore a full external review of governance is not required. However, a review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 4–5 February 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher; members of the senior leadership team; the heads of English, mathematics, art and design, and modern foreign languages; groups of students; the Chair of the Governing Body; the chair of the governors' teaching and learning committee; and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Twelve new members of staff took up their posts in September 2014. This included the head of science, the deputy headteacher responsible for quality assurance, the second-in-department for mathematics and the second-in-department for English. The previous second-in-department for English, who started at the school at Easter 2014, took on the role of head of English in September.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Achievement of the pupils in the school is improving. Predicted grades are more reliable. The most recent assessment data indicates that this year's Year 11 will achieve close to, or exceed, national levels for five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics.

Achievement in English and mathematics is also set to improve, with a higher proportion of students making the progress they should, as compared with the school's results in 2014. Results in mathematics are predicted to be close to or exceeding national levels for expected and more than expected progress. This rate of improvement is slower in English. Current figures suggest that national levels for making expected and more than expected progress will not be met in English.

The school's data shows that the gap in attainment between Year 11 students eligible for pupil premium funding and their peers is at least half a grade in both mathematics and English. This represents a rapid narrowing of the gap in mathematics and a slightly wider gap in English compared with last year's results. The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is improving, with some students demonstrating accelerated progress following appropriate interventions and staff training.

The quality of teaching

The planning for challenge of all students and for meeting the particular learning needs of specific groups of students remain areas for improvement. The use of data does not inform teachers' planning as a matter of routine, which means that work is

not routinely matched to students' capabilities so that they build on what they already know and can do. This limits the rate of progress of students as their full potential is not recognised by their teachers.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge. Lessons are characterised by good humour and a positive rapport between students and teachers. Students are co-operative and attentive. They show respect for their teachers and are ready to learn. They show an interest in their work. In a few lessons, this potential is recognised, relished and developed by their teacher so that students make accelerated progress. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, prior skills in drawing graphs were elicited and refined by the teacher. The students' learning then extended to the use of algebra to calculate and plot coordinates. By the end of the lesson, the students had produced accurate graphs and had been introduced to differentiation.

All too often, however, teachers miss opportunities to extend students' learning further. For example, when students' responses demonstrate a sophisticated application of the topic being discussed, teachers do not regularly adapt their questioning to enable the students to make the progress of which they are capable.

The new marking policy is not consistently applied. The content of many exercise books demonstrates that students have made progress over time. However, this is often not explicitly acknowledged or accelerated through targeted written feedback. There are examples across subjects where sections of work are completed without any marking. Where the marking policy is followed more closely – for example, in most cases in mathematics and science – regular feedback is given and students make corrections to their work, including to grammar, punctuation and spelling. Across the school, the quality of written feedback does not enable students to respond effectively or ensure that they know what they need to do to make progress.

Students use self- and peer-assessment well, and can explain their progress against clear success criteria. This was seen, for example, in a Year 8 science lesson and in Year 7 'Opening Minds'. This is most effective when validated by the teacher.

Literacy skills are boosted across different subjects. The correct use of key words, technical terminology and the rephrasing of responses to improve examination technique were seen as a regular feature of lessons. Opportunities to practise extended writing were seen in many lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The senior leaders have raised expectations about attendance and punctuality. There is a more rigorous follow-up of absence. Overall, attendance levels have improved and punctuality to lessons is good.

Senior leaders are addressing, as a matter of urgency, the high level of persistent absence in Year 11. There are support programmes for individual students, involving the work of outside agencies as needed, to overcome the barriers to attendance. There is not a clear overview of the success of these interventions, nor indications of improvements in the attendance of this group as a whole.

Students take pride in their work and attend their lessons ready to learn. There was little evidence of low-level disruption to learning during this inspection. When it does occur, teachers deal with it promptly and effectively. When students are distracted, it is often because there is too little challenge in lessons.

Senior leaders ensure detailed behaviour logs are maintained. Incidents of poor behaviour are managed on an individual basis and resolved effectively. However, leaders do not carry out a detailed analysis to identify patterns, for example, in different groups of students or at different times of day.

All safeguarding checks are in place according to statutory requirements.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The senior team is actively promoting a changing culture in the school in which the full potential of all students is recognised. There is a clear expectation that increasing proportions of students will make more than expected progress.

The headteacher has identified promptly the key issues to be addressed in order to tackle the areas for improvement effectively. She has reviewed responsibilities in the senior team so that there are clear lines of accountability and a strong line management structure for senior and middle leaders. Senior and middle leaders with new responsibilities have received appropriate training.

The headteacher has taken immediate action to improve the accuracy of predicted grades. This follows the high levels of inaccuracy seen in 2014. There is a new schedule for quality assurance. This includes standardisation meetings held in departments prior to each progress review. Senior line managers have identified and addressed training needs effectively. External support has improved internal systems for assessment and monitoring in several departments, including technology and English.

All new systems are regularly reviewed. For example, when the second assessment point showed a drop in levels of attainment for five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, this was scrutinised further to reveal the relative impact on predictions of mock examination and controlled assessment grades. The basis to predictions has been tightened further.

Senior leaders analyse carefully the reasons for low levels of achievement. A new data system has been introduced. All teachers are using this to record the results of regular assessments. The system enables the immediate identification of those students not achieving their target grade. The data is reviewed at half-termly meetings, with a clear expectation that students make accelerated progress. In addition, progress panel meetings take place every week. The panel comprises the headteacher, deputy headteacher responsible for quality assurance, head of Year 11, the progress coordinator, and the subject leaders for mathematics and English. Individual students are discussed. Pastoral support and interventions are put in place promptly according to the subjects they need to boost in order to achieve at least five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics. Year 11 tutor groups have been redefined so that students can move to tutor groups where they receive additional support in the subjects where it is most needed.

Senior leaders recognise the next steps for the development of the new data systems. It is not used routinely to track the progress of groups of students across all year groups and subjects, or as the basis for more effective setting of students. The entries for individual students do not include interim targets.

Teachers are being held more to account for the low attainment of students in their classes. The headteacher has introduced formal examination reviews following the examination results in summer 2014 and the recent Year 11 mock examinations. This has led to both immediate interventions and longer-term review of schemes of work to ensure improved levels of examination preparation; for example, adjusting the timing of coursework and controlled assessments.

The quality assurance process is more structured and rigorous since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is evaluated by formal observations; 'drop-ins', when members of the senior leadership team visit lessons with a specific focus; work scrutiny; and consultation with students. New lesson observation records are focused on learning and progress. While senior leaders have high expectations for the planning for different groups of students – for example, the most able and disabled students and those who have special educational needs – this is not seen as a matter of routine in lesson observations and data analysis.

Senior leaders have put in place support programmes to tackle teaching that is less than good. The programmes address specific training needs of individual teachers and include a wide range of professional development opportunities. There is close monitoring of the progress of individual teachers through the line management structure. There are clear targets for each teacher which refer to *Teachers' Standards* and the accelerated progress of students.

Senior leaders have an accurate view on the areas of strength and those areas for improvement in the quality of teaching across the school. The first evaluation of the quality of provision this academic year showed some improvement, with an

increased proportion of teaching judged by leaders to be good or better. Not all inadequate teaching has been eliminated. The support programme is at too early a stage to demonstrate its impact.

A specific teaching strategy has been adopted by the school and is becoming established. The strategy includes Level 1 training for all staff. There are coaches, trained to Level 2, based in each department. Coaches lead regular meetings and training sessions to share good practice, and these are well received.

The governing body responded promptly to the review of governance that took place early in 2014 and to the more recent review of the use of pupil premium funding following the last section 5 inspection.

The governors completed a skills audit and restructured their committees to match more closely the priorities of the school. They recognise they are overseeing a change in the culture of the school, with a clear appreciation of the high proportion of most-able students in the school and higher expectations for the achievement of all students.

The calendar for meetings of the governing body makes close reference to the quality assurance schedule. This means that governors meet regularly with the deputy headteacher responsible for quality assurance, soon after progress review meetings. They demonstrate sound understanding of the priorities for the school and challenge appropriately the patterns of progress for different groups.

The governors have been proactive in forging their own links to enable them to address areas for improvement more effectively. For example, they have organised visits to an outstanding school to develop their knowledge of provision for students who are eligible for support through the pupil premium. They are developing a structured schedule for their visits to the school and are setting up closer links with individual leaders and departments. As a result, they are well placed to take a more active role in the monitoring and evaluation schedule.

External support

The headteacher has ensured the deployment of external support is effective so that the key priorities of the school are addressed. The headteacher is supported very well by the local authority. This support has included moderation of judgements of the quality of teaching and learning through paired observations with members of the senior team, external review of work scrutiny, leadership development for senior and middle leaders, and governor training.

The local authority has brokered links with several local schools to provide, for example, mentoring for the headteacher, and leadership support for the technology department. Subject advisers have completed an external review of standardisation

to improve the accuracy of predicted grades and planning support in mathematics. A specialist leader of education has provided leadership development for the new head of English.