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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 to your school on 3–4 June 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 fourth 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 appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

NQTs may be appointed after consultation with Her Majesty's Inspector.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 3-4 June 2015

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the three assistant headteachers, the pastoral leader, the head of residential care, a group of new teaching staff, the Chair and two members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), the police officer who works with the school, and two representatives of the local authority. The inspector held informal discussions with students and staff throughout the inspection.

Context

Since the previous inspection a new assistant headteacher, three permanent teachers and several temporary teachers and support staff have joined the school. The school is now almost fully staffed with permanent appointments. There are currently 106 students on roll.

Achievement of pupils at the school

At the time of the monitoring inspection, Year 11 students were part way through sitting their GCSE examinations. The vast majority of students had attended for the examinations they were due to take and had completed their papers.

Year 10 students mainly continue to make steady progress towards a range of qualifications. In some subjects their books, teachers' assessments and learning in lessons suggest they are achieving well. For example in a GCSE history class students' answers and work showed a solid grasp of the key concepts they were learning. In Year 9, too many students are still not making enough progress overall, though there are some notable successes for individual students in different subjects. Some Year 9 students' behaviour continues to interfere with their learning. Previous issues of gaps in staffing or weak teaching continue to have an impact on students' achievement in some subjects in both Years 9 and 10. Some Year 9 and 10 students' achievement is also hampered by their poor attendance.

Year 7 and 8 are now really settled into their separate base, and this is having a positive impact. Attendance in these year groups has risen rapidly. The impact of the students' much improved attendance and behaviour, combined with a diet of increasingly good teaching and support, is having a clear impact on their progress. The majority of Year 7 students and a growing number of Year 8 students are now making nationally expected rates of progress in almost all their subjects.

The quality of teaching

In all the lessons visited during the inspection there was a clear focus on learning. On the few occasions where students were silly or tried to disrupt the flow of the lesson, staff were persistent, insisting that they focus on their work. Students generally arrived on time and worked until the end of the lesson. 'Catch up' time, when used well, reinforces the importance of learning, as students who have been disruptive have to finish the work they should have done in the lesson in their own time.

The most successful learning happened in the lessons where teachers clearly communicated their high expectations to the students from the outset. For example, in an English lesson in which the students were quite reluctant to engage, the teacher kept giving them prompts and clues rather than answering her own question, and greeted too-short responses with 'tell me more than that.' These teachers structured the lessons carefully to ensure that the students could meet these expectations and make good progress. Work, though usually all focused on the same theme, was carefully tailored to meet the students' individual needs. For example, in one lesson students took part in a lively opening discussion which allowed them to recall facts and to come up with theories. For the subsequent written activity, some students worked in pairs, some by themselves and some with adult support. Some had to write in bullets and some in more extended prose. Support sheets with vocabulary were given to support spelling as well as to expand vocabulary. In the best examples, pastoral and learning support staff were clear about their roles. They were redirected by the teacher as necessary, had good strategies to help the students to learn, and were confident enough with the subject matter to answer questions or to prompt students.

As reported at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, learning is sometimes hampered by a lack of modelling, for example teachers do not always show students how to set out a mathematical calculation or to write a particular type of sentence, so learning quickly stalls. Where pastoral and learning support staff are not confident with, or knowledgeable about, the subject or topic, they do not always receive the information they need from the teacher to help them assist the students. Where students are all given the same work at the same level, some find this too difficult and some too easy, so progress slows.

The majority of classrooms are well kept, with suitable learning prompts and sometimes students' work on display. The Year 7 and 8 area in particular is welcoming and bright, and classrooms clearly reflect the subject being taught. For example, the science laboratory has fish, plants, and displays which show students carrying out experiments. A few classrooms in the main teaching block are very untidy and do not support good learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Once again, students' behaviour around the site, at break and lunchtimes was generally calm and sensible. Students moved quickly to lessons when asked to do so by staff, though many now do not need to be reminded. Most students are wearing uniform. A few older students continue to flout the no-smoking rule if they think they can get away with it.

In lessons, behaviour was largely positive. Where a few students chose to disrupt when their lesson was observed, this was calmly and assertively dealt with by staff and learning continued. Many students are now more able to work together co-operatively and to talk to each other about their work. Good teamwork was observed in a physical education lesson. Bad language is infrequent and is challenged firmly by staff.

The reward and consequences system, which had just been introduced at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, is now well established. Students understand and respond to it. They like the use of the points and the graphs that are produced to show them how well they are doing. Younger students in particular are able to reflect on their behaviour because they are being taught to do so. For example, at the end of a mathematics lesson, the teacher asked each student in turn how many points out of five they should be awarded. Several considered that they should receive four. They explained that this was because they had not had a good start to the lesson but had quickly settled and completed their work, which the teacher agreed was a fair assessment. New staff have found the clarity and consistency of the system helpful in managing behaviour.

The use of physical intervention remains infrequent. Exclusions have continued to fall. The police 'surgeries' continue to be effective in helping to reduce repeat exclusions and to support vulnerable students.

Over a third of students now attend over 90% of the time. Attendance in Years 7 and 8 is consistently around 90%. A group of other students are steadily improving their attendance from 80% or more. The school rigorously pursues all non-attendance. A first-day call is swiftly followed by a home visit on the second day of absence, and again on the fourth day. Social care is informed immediately where there is a known child protection issue and police are involved by the fifth day if any student has not been seen. Students with low attendance and complex family issues are being supported by the multi-agency panel which now meets monthly. Overall attendance remains very low but there are notable successes and improvements at all levels.

Where students regularly stay overnight in the residential provision, this continues to have a positive impact on their attendance, behaviour and attitudes, and overall enjoyment of school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and the senior leadership team have continued to improve all aspects of the school's work. Leaders at other levels are steadily growing in competence and confidence, so leadership is starting to be shared more widely, which is also promoting improvement.

Leaders have recognised that there needs to be a renewed focus on the quality of teaching. Many staff have joined the school over the last year, so have missed earlier training and strategies. A broad programme of training and support is being implemented by the new senior leader in charge of this area, in order to make the most of staff's skills, share good practice, and tackle aspects that still need to be improved. Many staff have responded to this work with enthusiasm and are keen to support each other.

The school's work with parents and families continues to strengthen. During the monitoring inspection, the Year 7 and 8 students were holding a coffee morning for their parents so that they could show them their classrooms and the work they were doing. A number of parents and carers attended and students were clearly proud to show off their work. Parents and carers were very positive about the school's impact on their children.

The school is keen to take Year 6 students from September. They have good plans in place to make this viable, modelled on the current successful 'mini-school' approach that has been adopted with Years 7 and 8.

The IEB has a good overview of the school's work and remains highly supportive. Sensibly, following the last monitoring inspection, members have focused more closely on teaching and learning, while still retaining a close oversight of behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. There are still no arrangements for the substantive leadership of the school. The current arrangements, where the headship is shared between Lindsworth and Springfield House, are effective for Lindsworth. Discussions are underway about whether these could be continued, but no final decision has been taken.

External support

The monthly multi-agency panel is working well and is a crucial part of the continuing support for the school. The school receives good support for school improvement and suitable advice on governance. Arrangements to secure substantive leadership for the school are slow and the local authority is aware of the

urgent need to support the IEB in moving this forward. A decision about whether the school is going to admit Year 6 students is also urgently needed so that the school can implement good induction processes if this is going ahead.