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25 June 2015

Mrs Helen Shepherd  
Acting Principal  
Royal School for the Deaf Derby  
Ashbourne Road  
Derby  
DE22 3BH

Dear Mrs Shepherd

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Royal School for the Deaf Derby**

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 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 February 2015.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the acting Principal and the interim executive Principal and other leaders. I also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and the Chair of the Trustees. The trustees' statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection the Principal has resigned. Since Easter, an interim executive Principal has been providing support to school leaders and governors. Six new governors have been appointed very recently.

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

Senior leaders, staff and governors are working together with a shared determination that the school becomes good as soon as possible. During my visits to lessons and in my conversations with pupils, positive relationships between staff and

pupils were consistently apparent. High levels of engagement were evident in lessons and in other school activities such as organised lunchtime games. Pupils from early years to the sixth form showed good levels of attention and concentration when working in class. Pupils told me that they enjoy their lessons. Some older students talked confidently about their plans for the future, which for some include university.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school and that they are well looked after by the adults in school. They explained that when there are occasional incidents of bullying, staff sort them out quickly and effectively. Pupils are able to report any concerns about safety and well-being through a system of drop boxes which are regularly checked and appropriately followed up by staff with safeguarding responsibilities.

The trustees' statement of action and the school action plan, in combination, meet the minimum requirements. Some parts of the initial plan lack precision and do not fully explain how the required improvements will be made or how leaders, governors and trustees will determine whether the actions taken have been successful. However, a number of audits and external reviews have taken place since this initial plan was written. You have rightly started to use the findings from these audits and reviews to update the school action plans to show more precisely how each area for improvement identified will be addressed and how progress will be checked and evaluated. It is too early to evaluate the impact of these new plans.

All governors, except those very recently appointed, have attended safeguarding training provided by Derby City local authority. Governors have ensured that they are familiar with their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding as set out in the current statutory guidance. Governors have made certain that all school staff have been appropriately checked to ensure their suitability to work with children. They have also ensured that all staff have received training so that they are clear about the actions they should take if they are concerned about a pupil. Additional staff have been trained as designated safeguarding leaders so that there is always an appropriately trained member of the senior staff available to deal with any concerns or incidents.

The staff who I spoke with during the inspection, were clear about their duty to promptly report any concerns to the designated leaders and knew that they should make a careful written record of these concerns.

Leaders keep written records of any significant incidents regarding pupils' behaviour or well-being. However, leaders do not always ensure that all the important information is recorded and shared between school staff and staff in the residences.

The safeguarding policy has been updated but requires further modification to ensure that it includes all of the required information and so that it reflects the particular needs of the pupils attending the school.

Pupil absences are now followed up more promptly and robustly in order to check that pupils are safe. For example, repeated texts are sent to parents until a response is received. If no response is received within an hour then school staff make contact with the pupil's home local authority to request that further checks are made to confirm the pupil's safety and well-being.

A comprehensive safety audit has been undertaken and the school has acted promptly to resolve any issues identified as requiring urgent attention. For example the fountain and pond are now securely fenced. Risk assessments are completed for a range of activities but these are not always updated and adapted to reflect the different needs of individual pupils.

School leaders and governors recognise the urgent need to establish a stable and sustainable leadership structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities so that leaders can be held to account for their work. The interim executive Principal is providing valuable support to governors to help them clarify roles and consider options for an effective leadership team structure.

You are now making sure that your judgements about the quality of teaching are based on a broad range of evidence. This includes information about pupils' progress and evaluations of the work in pupils' books as well as lesson observation records. This work is in its early stages but it is beginning to help you to develop an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. You are rightly considering ways that you can share particular strengths in the work of some teachers so that this good practice becomes more consistent across the school.

You have also begun to make improvements to the way that information about each individual pupil's progress is organised and used. Documents now include information about each pupil's starting points as well as national expectations for pupils' progress. This is beginning to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers' plans have been adapted to include information about each pupil's starting points and to include personalised learning objectives and assessment opportunities. You and the interim executive Principal recognise the need to establish a programme of regular meetings with teachers when you use assessment information to hold them to account for the progress of pupils in their class.

Leaders and teachers are rightly considering ways of setting and communicating meaningful individual learning targets for pupils so that they understand how they should improve their work. Leaders have also begun to work more closely with the colleges and alternative provision attended by older students so that teachers, students, parents and leaders have a more accurate shared understanding of students' current attainment and next steps.

Governors and trustees recognise that, in the past, they have relied too much on information provided by the Principal and have not ensured that they are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in holding leaders to account for their work. They are now working hard to ensure that they are better informed about their statutory responsibilities but recognise that further improvement is required. For example, governors have ensured that the safeguarding policy has been updated but are unsure of how they should check that it meets the current requirements. Following an external review of governance and an audit of governors' skills, several new governors with particular expertise have been very recently appointed. The Chair of the Trustees also recognises the need to recruit new trustees with appropriate skills and expertise so that the trustees can provide appropriate challenge to both governors and school leaders in order that the school can be removed from special measures as soon as possible.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The proprietor's statement of action is fit for purpose

The school's action plan is fit for purpose

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

The school may appoint one newly qualified teacher (NQT) to teach computing from September. No other NQTs should be appointed without my prior agreement.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Education Funding Agency, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Chair of the Trustees and the Director of Children's Services for Derby City. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**