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Mrs Karen Ingham
Acting Headteacher
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Lancashire
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Dear Mrs Ingham

Special measures monitoring inspection of Glenburn Sports College

Following my visit with John Shutt, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 December 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 fifth 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 taking effective action 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Dawn Platt
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in order to raise standards, especially in mathematics and science, and ensure that all groups of pupils make at least good progress in all subjects by teachers:
 - setting work that is appropriate to the different abilities of pupils in each lesson and ensuring that this results in pupils behaving well in all lessons
 - always ensuring that pupils are stretched and made to think deeply, especially the most able
 - raising their expectations of the pupils and insisting that all pupils' work is completed and presented well, particularly in mathematics and science
 - ensuring they mark work regularly with specific comments on how to improve it and giving pupils opportunities to respond to these comments.
- Urgently improve the impact of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels are actively involved in checking the impact of any strategies to improve pupils' achievements
 - developing the expertise of subject leaders so all can hold the teachers in their departments effectively to account for the progress their pupils make
 - always having a clear focus on the progress pupils make when evaluating the quality of teaching and deciding the pay that teachers receive
 - governors holding the school to account more effectively for all its work.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 December 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and read pupils' books. They met with the acting headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and two members of the governing body. Inspectors also held a discussion with a local authority representative and the headteacher of Penwortham Girls' High School, who provides support to the school. An inspector visited a tutorial and an assembly, as well as a range of lessons, of which four were jointly observed with the acting headteacher. Discussions were held with 28 pupils and informal conversations were held with pupils during lessons and at breaktimes. Inspectors considered the results of the school's own surveys of parents' views. During this inspection, particular emphasis was placed on evaluating leaders' preparation for pupils' transition to Lathom High School in the summer of 2016.

Context

Glenburn Sports College is due to close in the summer of 2016. Arrangements have been put in place for pupils to transfer to Lathom High School. Since the last monitoring inspection, the contracts of twenty members of staff have been terminated. The head of modern foreign languages now leads the English department. The school has increased its use of non-specialists to teach some subjects, including English and mathematics, in Years 9 and 11.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The results of GCSE examinations in the summer 2015 showed an improvement for the school. The proportion of pupils who achieved five or more GCSE qualifications, including English and mathematics, met the government's floor standards. The rates of progress made by pupils in English and mathematics improved and the overall gaps between the performance of the disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school narrowed; however, the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in the school and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally remains wide. Attainment is in line with national figures in art, chemistry, drama, textiles, information and communication technology (ICT), further mathematics and child development. Pupils' achievement in French continues to be a strength of the school.

The school's own assessment information indicates that current Year 11 pupils are likely to attain GCSE grades that are an improvement on the school's 2015 results. The green shoots of improvement, seen at the previous monitoring inspection, have continued to develop. The school's evaluation of teaching and learning and teachers' assessment of pupils' achievement are based on well-grounded evidence. Effective external support and whole-school action plans are having a positive effect on driving improvements in pupils' outcomes. However, there are some remaining

challenges for leaders and teachers within the school. For example, the underperformance of disadvantaged boys and the need to continue the rapid improvement made in science still remain key areas of focus.

Carefully thought-out systems, put in place by school improvement partnerships, are now embedded to ensure much greater accountability at all levels. Most teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of pupils' targets and they review progress towards these regularly. Pupils are making better progress in many subjects – mirroring the improving examination results seen in 2015.

Reading improvements are prioritised; Year 9 pupils are mentored and supported with trained Year 11 reading mentors. The weakest readers are supported well by the special educational needs leader. Most pupils make good progress in reading as a result of the support they receive from teachers, mentors and the special educational needs coordinator; however, few pupils read challenging books for pleasure.

The quality of teaching

All teachers have continued to raise the bar since the last inspection, with a determined and continued improvement in practice. Great care has been taken to celebrate pupils' work in displays; a good climate for learning is established in most classrooms, which motivates pupils and emphasises the importance of learning. Teachers who are teaching subjects other than their specialisms have responded well to the support provided by Penwortham Girls' High School and the local authority. Teachers enjoy the collaboration and support with colleagues both in school and beyond the school to enhance their teaching skills. Whole-staff training and the sharing of best practice are helping to strengthen teaching. English teaching has been revived through the effective leadership by the head of modern foreign languages. The commitment of staff and their willingness to develop their knowledge in different subjects is having a positive effect as teaching is improving.

Staff support and development is driven through whole-staff training with a focus on sharing best practice and working together. There is a high proportion of boys on roll and leaders recognise the urgency to develop teachers' skills in engaging boys in successful learning. However, systems to improve boys' engagement, and achievement are not successfully used across all areas of the school. Some teaching does not capture the interest of boys and this leads to slower learning.

The most effective learning occurs when teachers show a passion for their subject, and have strong relationships with pupils and high expectations of what they can achieve. Pupils often respond with enthusiasm and seek further explanations if they do not fully understand. For example, in mathematics teaching has been transformed; pupils display pride in their work and stronger progress is now being made.

Inspectors saw examples of engaging teaching underpinned by well-structured planning and appropriate use of resources to the different abilities of pupils. However, some initiatives are not yet fully embedded and there remains inconsistency in their application across subjects and year groups. Teachers do not always help pupils to understand and use subject-specific vocabulary; consequently opportunities are missed to dismantle barriers to learning which exist for some pupils because of poor literacy skills.

Teachers are more aware of information relating to pupils' progress and are conscious of the different groups of pupils in their classes, such as those who are disadvantaged. Not all teachers use this information successfully to engage and stretch the most-able pupils.

The acting headteacher and her leadership team have revised the school's marking policy to help pupils to better understand how they can improve in response to their teachers' feedback. The implementation of this policy is particularly strong in English and mathematics, where pupils act on their teachers' comments. The quality of pupils' presentation is improving. However, some middle leaders do not ensure that the school's policy is consistently applied.

Teachers are making good use of tutorial sessions to tackle pupils' basic literacy skills. Structured activities have been put in place such as spelling tests and individual support to complement work done in other subjects.

The importance of homework has been emphasised throughout the school. Most pupils complete their homework and value the rewards they receive for their efforts. However, homework does not always provide an appropriate level of challenge. While leaders use the online homework tool to monitor the setting of homework among teachers, the level of difficulty is not always matched well with pupils' needs. Pupils do not use their homework diaries to aid and support their personal organisation.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

A reduction in the number of pupils on site has resulted in a quieter, more stable, harmonious atmosphere around the school than was seen at the previous monitoring inspection. Many pupils behave well around the school without direct adult supervision. Pupils take pride in their uniform. Year 11 prefects support and uphold the school's behaviour policy effectively. There is a sense of comradeship around the school.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are often positive. Real enthusiasm for learning was seen by inspectors in art, English, mathematics, and food technology. Very few lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour and a successful system to tackle persistent poor

behaviour has been established by leaders. A few pupils sometimes display poor behaviour that results in them being excluded from lessons. The incidence of permanent and fixed-term exclusions has significantly reduced.

Pupils who met with inspectors expressed the view that behaviour in classes was invariably good with negligible time lost due to poor behaviour. The school's records show a decrease in the occurrence of bullying. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils remain robust.

Attendance is continuing to improve for most groups of pupils and is now much closer to the national average. The absence of disadvantaged boys has improved, but still remains below others in the school. Teachers, support staff, and leaders rigorously follow up all absences.

Leaders across the school recognise that spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is still a high priority. They ensure that pupils are given good opportunities to discuss relevant issues; for example, pupils engaged well in the recently assembly regarding child sexual exploitation.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The direction and vision from the acting headteacher and her senior leadership team has been embraced by all staff. Leaders are working hard to keep the school on track towards removal from special measures, despite the additional challenges presented by the school's forthcoming closure. The acting headteacher and governing body are determined to do their best for the pupils in their charge. Together, they ensure that pupils' progress is the top priority for all teachers, as well as developing positive long-lasting memories for pupils to cherish. Consequently, the good work identified in the previous monitoring inspection has been swiftly built up on.

Senior leaders are acutely aware of the needs of pupils in their care. Strong systems for checking the school's work are now embedded: leaders regularly undertake lesson observations, scrutinise pupils' books and survey pupils about their work. These checks provide leaders with an accurate 'snapshot' of pupils' learning. All leaders are proactive and have clear action plans to ensure that improvements are maintained.

Leaders have a good understanding of how to support pupils in their transition when Glenburn closes. Teachers are in regular consultation with Lathom High School to enable a smooth transfer for pupils in Year 9. Leaders have ensured that the school's curriculum is synchronised with that of Lathom High School so that pupils understand their work when they transfer. Opportunities for staff in both schools to plan and discuss next steps are in place.

Senior leaders and governors respond quickly to recommendations for improvement and the school is steadily moving forward as a result. Disadvantaged pupils are tracked closely and barriers to progress are reviewed. The pupil premium funding is being used creatively, for instance, to support careers education and guidance for Year 11 pupils. Leaders ensure that pupils' learning experience is enriched with a range of trips and timetabled academic support. Staff commitment to pupils is well established and a strong ethos of care pervades the school.

The governors have considerable expertise and have continued to grow in strength in driving improvements across the school. They are passionate about improving the outcomes for pupils. A well organised team is in place to drive the plan for the school's closure. Alongside this work, governors continue to use their training well to hold leaders to account. Plans are in place for the local authority to complete a review of special educational needs, recommended in the last monitoring inspection. Minutes of governing body meetings demonstrate that governors understand the information that leaders present to them and ask them challenging questions about it. Governors do not shy away from hard staffing decisions and hold teachers to account for pupils' performance with robust performance management. Governors have a tight rein on resources and financial probity is well structured; there is a strong focus on the use of existing resources for current pupils.

External support

The dedicated, hardworking, acting headteacher has quickly established a focus on improvements in learning by engaging positively with the considerable high-quality support and challenge offered by the local authority and Penwortham Girls' High School. The local authority school improvement team has funded consultants in English and mathematics to develop teaching and learning and support those teachers who are teaching subjects other than their specialisms. Science teachers have also compared their assessments of pupils' work with those in another school and have adjusted pupils' coursework marks accordingly. A range of effective support has been provided by Penwortham Girls' High School to support teachers and pupils. For example, teachers have been provided with the opportunity to share good practice and increase their subject knowledge to aid the delivery and teaching of geography and religious education. The impact of the rich and varied support provided is beginning to show improvements, reflected in teaching and learning and recent 2015 GCSE outcomes.