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12 January 2016

Ms Lynette Norris  
Headteacher  
Highfield Humanities College  
Highfield Road  
Blackpool  
Lancashire  
FY4 3JZ

Dear Ms Norris

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Highfield Humanities College**

Following my visit (with Neil Mackenzie, Her Majesty's Inspector, Linda Foley, Ofsted Inspector, and Clive Hurren, Ofsted Inspector) to your school on 9 and 10 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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:

### **Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection only in those subjects where the school has proven capacity to provide those teachers with high-quality professional support and leadership.

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 Blackpool.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2014.**

- Improve teaching, in order to raise the achievement of all students, but particularly for boys, disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs, by:
  - ensuring all teachers have very high expectations, both of what students can achieve, and also of how students should behave and present their work at all times
  - rapidly ensuring that teachers gain an accurate understanding of students' current achievement in all subjects
  - ensuring teachers use available information to plan lessons that are engaging, and challenge students of all abilities to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of their subjects
  - ensuring students have regular opportunities to practise and develop the basic skills they need in literacy and mathematics
  - ensuring that all teachers regularly mark students' work, provide students with clear guidance on how to improve their learning, and check that this happens.
  
- Improve students' behaviour in lessons, by:
  - providing more inspiring learning opportunities to motivate students and raise their expectations about how much they can achieve
  - improving students' understanding of the impact poor behaviour has on the progress they make.
  
- Urgently secure students' safety, by:
  - working closely with students to review how the school deals with bullying, and build confidence across the whole school community that bullying will be dealt with quickly and effectively
  - working closely with students and their families to improve attendance so that it rapidly increases to be at least in line with the national average.
  
- Improve the effectiveness and impact of leaders, including governors, by:
  - ensuring all leaders communicate an uncompromising vision of excellence for all aspects of the school's work
  - quickly securing an accurate assessment of students' achievements across all subjects and year groups, and using this to improve teaching and school improvement planning
  - ensuring that leaders take effective steps to support staff in securing a consistent approach to managing behaviour

- ensuring leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is based on a thorough and frank analysis of student outcomes, and that this directly informs strategic improvement planning.

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

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 management may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 December 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle managers and teachers. Inspectors met with four groups of pupils and talked with many pupils during breaks and lunchtimes. Several learning walks of the school were conducted with a special focus on pupils' behaviour. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at the start of the day, during break and lunchtimes and at the conclusion of the school day. Inspectors also met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors met with the chief executive and two representatives of the Tauheedul Education Trust. Interviews were also conducted with several parents, at their request.

### **Context**

A new headteacher took up post in September 2015 as did a new assistant headteacher. Since the last inspection monitoring visit there has been a 23% turnover of teaching staff. New appointments have been made to the leadership of English, mathematics and science. In September 2015 the Tauheedul Education Trust was appointed as the sponsor designate of the school, which is expected to acquire academy status. It is anticipated that the Tauheedul Education Trust will assume full responsibility for the new academy in the spring of 2016.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The cohort of pupils who entered the school in 2010 as Year 7 did so with prior attainment slightly above the national average. This cohort left the school in 2015 at the end of Year 11 with both attainment and progress in the core subjects that was below and, in some cases, significantly below national averages. For a majority of these pupils, secondary education had failed them in crucial aspects. The school's projected outcomes for GCSE examination results in 2015 proved over optimistic: examination results plummeted. Pupils made progress significantly below that which was expected across a broad range of subjects. School information indicates that at Key Stage 3, pupils moving from Year 7 to 8 made little progress in their first year of secondary education. Current school information indicates that pupils at Key Stage 4 are making better progress; however, this remains significantly below what they should be achieving. The progress of current pupils in Key Stage 3 remains variable. Many pupils told inspectors of their disappointment and anxiety at constantly underachieving.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching and learning remains variable. In too many lessons pupils are not achieving the standards or making the progress of which they are capable. Teachers are not planning lessons so that activities enable all pupils to make good or better progress. School information is not effectively used to plan learning and learning activities. Poor behaviour goes unchecked in too many lessons and this impacts on the progress and quality of learning of all pupils.

A sense of purpose and focus is missing from too many lessons. Pupils are easily distracted from their work. Many pupils do not take sufficient pride in their work and consequently work is poorly recorded and presented in exercise books. Relationships between teachers and pupils are not always positive and this lack of respect and trust at times hinders learning. Teaching and learning in mathematics and science require rapid improvement. In English and humanities, teaching is more purposeful and pupils are generally making better progress.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

At times, this school is an unsafe place for pupils. During break and lunch periods, poor behaviour sometimes goes unnoticed by adults and when seen is not always corrected. During the inspection some pupils were seen running around the atrium area at will and an unpredictable and over-boisterous atmosphere was evident. The behaviour of a significant minority of pupils is unacceptable. An inspector observed a group of pupils running into the atrium scattering tables and chairs as they went. Pupils told inspectors that lifts were unsafe and that pupils 'piled' into these unchecked or unaccompanied by adults. The lead inspector requested school leaders to review pupils' use of the lifts immediately. A significant minority of pupils ignore adults' instructions.

In too many lessons, the school behaviour code is not applied; a semblance of order and focused learning does not prevail. In the English and humanities departments, good behaviour was observed but these two areas were isolated enclaves. Too many pupils are out of class for no appropriate purpose. For example, inspectors met two Year 8 pupils who said they were absented from a set one mathematics lesson to distribute detention notices to Year 10 pupils. Many pupils expressed their concern to inspectors about behaviour. Pupils spoke of regular fights breaking out between pupils and this was confirmed by two parents in discussions with the lead inspector. Acute concerns were reflected in parental responses and interviews with parents on behaviour. Teachers and middle leaders also expressed to inspectors their concerns about unchecked poor pupil behaviour and a growing inconsistency in the application of behaviour rules across the school.

The lead inspector became so concerned about behaviour and the potential for it to impact upon pupils' safety that he requested senior leaders to write an action plan to immediately tackle these concerns before the conclusion of the inspection. This they

duly did. The lead inspector also requested that the local authority work with school leaders to refine and implement this plan with immediate effect.

Punctuality is poor. Attendance is declining and remains too low.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

The new headteacher has started to change systems so as to better record pupils' progress and plan for more appropriate interventions to accelerate improvement. A central focus has been placed on ensuring that information on pupils' progress and attainment is accurate. However, currently the headteacher lacks sufficient capacity at senior and middle leadership level to move the school forward effectively. New senior leaders are being appointed in order to enhance capacity. The school faces a real challenge in establishing greater permanency and commitment from the teaching staff.

Inspectors found safeguarding documentation and procedures to be effective, for instance with regard to the recruitment of staff and the support for the most vulnerable pupils.

The Tauheedul Education Trust is presently supporting new school leadership. New initiatives are being introduced. Changes to key middle leadership roles and curriculum organisation have occurred, although the impact of these in crucial areas such as science and mathematics remains uncertain. New leadership in English has made an impact through improved planning and the organisation of learning within that subject. A clearer strategic direction has been charted. However, all leaders realise that pupils' behaviour must improve as must the consistency and application of good teaching in all lessons and across all subjects.

Governors expressed concerns over issues raised by inspectors. They are monitoring behaviour issues and matters relating to the quality of teaching and learning regularly. They reaffirmed their confidence in the Tauheedul Education Trust. Governors said that they would ensure that recommendations made by inspectors were acted on with immediate effect.

Inspectors sensed a palpable desire among the majority of pupils they spoke with to do well in their lessons and succeed in their secondary education. They expressed an energy and ambition for better learning. There is some good teaching within the school. Leaders have not yet found the ways and means to establish these energies and ambitions as the driving culture of the school. They need to do this quickly.

### **External support**

The Tauheedul Education Trust is currently offering much support, and evidence of the impact of this was clear. There is, for example, a more focused and purposeful

approach to improvement planning. Crucial issues to be tackled are recognised and efforts are being made to enable greater capacity at senior and middle leadership levels. Additional support has been brought in to build capacity in science.

There has been opposition within the local community to academisation and to the decision to appoint the Tauheedul Education Trust as sponsor. Tauheedul has already started working with the local community by outlining its plans for improvement and its objective of building a positive, high-quality and successful learning ethos at the school. Many staff spoken to by inspectors welcomed the appointment of Tauheedul, as did a number of pupils.