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Tawanda Madhlangobe  
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Dear Dr Madhlangobe

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Pinetree School**

Following my visit to your school on 4 October 2016, 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 that 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 that took place in July 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in July 2015**

- Urgently improve the safeguarding of all pupils by ensuring that:
  - all the safer recruitment checks required by law are completed and recorded on the school's single central record
  - the school site is safe and that all health and safety requirements are met
  - the use of locked doors as a behaviour management tool is reviewed, and staff develop pupils' ability to manage their own behaviour around the school site
  - procedures to tackle persistent absence are used robustly so that attendance increases
  - risk-assessment procedures relating to off-site trips and visits are in place.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors by ensuring that:
  - all aspects of the school's work are evaluated thoroughly, that detailed improvement plans are put in place, and that leaders and governors monitor their implementation thoroughly
  - all statutory policies and procedures are in place, up to date and reflected in day-to-day practice
  - pupils' emotional and health needs, together with the extent of their prior knowledge, understanding and skills, are assessed carefully when they join the school and that this information is used to plan their learning
  - systematic checks on the behaviour and progress of pupils undertaking off-site alternative provision take place
  - the quality of teaching, and the suitability and accuracy of assessment, are monitored carefully so that this information is used to assess the impact of teaching on pupils' progress
  - systems are put in place that manage the performance of staff, and ensure their appropriate professional development
  - all leaders have the knowledge and skills they need to drive improvement within their areas of responsibility, drawing further upon the resources of the trust in order to build leadership capacity.
- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that teachers in all subjects:
  - have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and respond effectively to instances of disruption
  - encourage high expectations by putting in place aspirational targets for pupils that are appropriate to their starting points

- establish the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding caused by previous weaknesses in teaching, and provide appropriate support in order to fill them
- use their understanding of what pupils know and can do to plan engaging activities that are suitably challenging, so that pupils can take the next steps in their learning
- provide regular and precise subject-specific feedback that makes clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work, and ensure that they make the necessary changes
- help those pupils with low levels of literacy so that they can read and write well
- observe the good practice that exists within the school, particularly in mathematics and in science, and benefit from high-quality training.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 4 October 2016**

### **Evidence**

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you, the chair and the clerk of the local governing body, and the director of the Engage Trust. Safeguarding was not inspected in detail because at the time of the last monitoring inspection, significant improvements had already been made and all procedures and policies were securely in place. However, the single central record was scrutinised to confirm that checks of three members of staff who joined the school this term had been carried out.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, a new, full-time, permanent deputy headteacher has taken up his post. An instructor of physical education has joined the school on a short-term, temporary basis. Two further teachers were interviewed and appointed this week. The trust has reduced the number of pupils attending the school from 36 to 25 pupils.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

School leaders have taken urgent and effective action to improve the poor behaviour noted at the time of the last monitoring inspection. Four pupils displaying the most challenging behaviours have been transferred to other schools within the trust that are better placed to meet their needs. Agreed procedures to manage pupils' behaviour in lessons have been reaffirmed and all staff are expected to apply them consistently. The school's use of credits awarded for positive behaviour and attitudes is beginning to be accepted by pupils. Increasingly, most of them recognise the value of gaining credits and the rewards they bring.

Locks on doors have been removed to encourage pupils to take greater responsibility for making decisions and managing their own behaviour. Good displays in corridors and classrooms are treated respectfully by pupils, and add significantly to the vibrancy of the school.

The school is calmer, and more orderly. Most pupils work purposefully in lessons. They show much more respect for one another and for staff. Records show that incidents of serious misbehaviour are falling. One-day exclusions have risen slightly as staff seek to reinforce pupils' understanding of the higher expectations of them. Senior leaders acknowledge that more time is needed for these arrangements to become firmly established and promote good behaviour throughout the school.

The trust has acted decisively to strengthen the school's leadership and management. This is providing greater capacity to make improvements. An

experienced leader has been appointed as deputy headteacher to develop teaching and learning and establish systematic procedures to assess pupils' progress. The assistant headteacher's teaching timetable has been adjusted to give him more time to lead improvements to pupils' behaviour. Another experienced senior leader has been seconded from within the trust to work alongside the headteacher to lead further improvements.

The trust has also increased its monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. A new programme of regular visits by governors is in place. Four visits have already taken place and the findings shared with senior leaders and trust members. This is holding senior leaders and staff much more accountable for increasing the rate of improvements made.

The school's improvement and development plan remains in place but has been supplemented by an additional, rapid improvement plan. This includes clear actions, timescales and targets to gauge the rate of improvement made. Some of these targets are not sharp enough to enable senior leaders to accurately measure the improvements made. Staff are held fully accountable for their areas of responsibility.

As expectations of behaviour rise, senior leaders recognise the need for rapid improvements to the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Learning walks carried out by the headteacher and deputy headteacher are becoming routine. This is providing a clearer picture of what staff do well, and what needs improving. The findings also inform weekly training and development provided for all staff.

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

Our joint observations of pupils at work in lessons confirmed your own views that behaviour is getting better. Most pupils behaved themselves, engaged with staff and showed some interest in their work. Teaching is no longer interrupted by pupils shouting out, swearing or disengaging from learning.

Classes are small, so pupils benefit greatly from almost one-to-one support from teachers and teaching assistants. Incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with promptly. If they escalate, pupils are usually removed from lessons, accompanied by a teaching assistant, to avoid disrupting the learning of others.

The impact of improved behaviour and attitudes is evident in pupils' books. For example, in English, the quality and quantity of pupils' work since the start of this term show that pupils are expected to work hard and present their work neatly. Their work is marked regularly and this provides them with advice on what has been done well, and what needs improving. However, pupils are not asked to follow up on comments and correct basic spelling and grammatical errors. The same volume of work is not matched in pupils' mathematics and science books. At times,

work is minimal or is left incomplete.

Our observations also noted new procedures introduced this term. Starter activities introduced to capture pupils' interest at the start of lessons are working. Teachers share learning objectives and plan slightly different tasks for each pupil, based on what they know about what pupils can already do. Pupils decide whether to tackle the gold, silver or bronze level challenges. Planning sheets include good opportunities for pupils to reflect upon and review their learning, but these are not used consistently. Some staff fill them in for pupils, and others leave them blank. These inconsistencies limit the overall impact of this new approach on improving the quality of pupils' learning and progress.

Teaching assistants are being used to teach, rather than simply supervise. In the best examples, they work alongside individual pupils effectively to teach and support their learning. They explain tasks fully and show pupils the next steps when they find work difficult. This also gives teachers time to focus on the learning of other pupils.

Expectations of pupils are higher. The code of conduct is displayed in classrooms to remind pupils how they should behave. Teachers regularly remind pupils of the need to meet these expectations if they want to receive credits. At the end of lessons, pupils discuss with staff how well they have behaved, and readily present their record cards to accrue credits they have earned.

A programme of regular training is in place in weekly staff meetings and externally provided staff development sessions. Staff also have Tuesday afternoons to plan and prepare as pupils leave school at lunchtime. New arrangements have been made to enable teachers to visit other schools within the trust to learn from their good practice.

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

Your morning assemblies continue to set the tone for learning, as do the care and support shown to pupils by staff as they leave school each day.

Behaviour is improving, but a few minor incidents continue as new procedures and higher expectations become established. A small minority of pupils leave lessons without permission. A few continue to use unacceptable, bad language. You and your staff feel that such incidents will reduce further as the awarding of credits becomes embedded.

More needs to be done to promote good attitudes towards learning. Commonly, teachers work much harder than pupils and have to negotiate with pupils to get them to apply themselves, particularly to writing.

Overall attendance is below average. This presents a significant barrier to overcome before the school's re-inspection. The school's detailed analysis of the attendance of

individual pupils and the reasons for their persistent absence shows that the majority attend regularly, but a small minority of pupils attend for less than half of the time. Action is being taken to challenge the parents of pupils who are persistently absent. Admission arrangements have been amended to avoid accepting new pupils who never attend school.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Higher expectations of pupils and staff and improvements in teaching are leading to better progress made by pupils in lessons. Pupils are more engaged and focused on their work. Marking and feedback provided for them are aiding their progress.

Approximately half of your pupils are eligible for the pupil premium and almost all of them have special educational needs and/or disabilities. To raise overall achievement you are tailoring support for each one of them, enabling all individual pupils to make improved progress. This year, almost all Year 11 pupils were entered for GCSE examinations and other awards. Your analysis of results shows that most of them achieved pass grades in English, but far fewer did so in mathematics. The lack of rigorous procedures to track pupils' progress from entry to exit from the school means that currently, you are unable to determine their overall progress. Installing systematic procedures to measure pupils' progress over time is rightly prioritised in the school's improvement planning.

Your assessments indicate that pupils' progress in both key stages shows some improvement, but the legacy of poor teaching in the past means that significant underachievement in English, science and computing remains.

### **External support**

The director of the trust continues to meet weekly with the headteacher to review the progress made in securing improvement. The school is working with the Department for Education to monitor its improvement. A visit by one of its advisers has taken place since Ofsted's last monitoring visit.

The trust has commissioned two school improvement partners to provide external, objective evaluations of the school's effectiveness. The first visit is planned for later this term.