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Mr Bennett
The Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bennett

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF Meade Hill School

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 8 and 9 November, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2004.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

I observed eight lessons, scrutinised documents and met with headteacher, deputy headteacher, teachers, the school council, the chair of governors, a representative from the Local Authority, and the Principal of the Federation. I also observed two assemblies, lunchtimes, and visited the provision at Castlefield Centre in Manchester.

Context

Since the previous visit the school has appointed a permanent deputy headteacher. The school is part of a Federation making provision for pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties across the borough. The Federation recently opened a vocational training centre at the Castlefield site in Manchester. Plans are in place for the school to be re-built on a mainstream school site in two years' time.

Achievement and standards

Those pupils who attend school regularly, 23 out of 38, are making satisfactory, and for some, good progress in their learning. In the end of Year 9 tests in 2005, six pupils achieved the expected Level 5 or above in mathematics, three in science, and three in English. These results indicated that these more able pupils had made good progress towards reaching their potential. Eight of the thirteen pupils in the cohort had successfully taken national tests. Overall nine pupils in years 7 to 9 who were based at the Meade Hill site made good progress in their learning.

At the end of Year 11 in 2005, two pupils achieved Level 2 and one achieved Level 1 in Entry Level certificates in English. The success for these pupils was in achieving external accreditation for their work. GCSE courses have been introduced in English, mathematics, science and information communication technology (ICT) since September, and six of the ten pupils in the current Year 10 are expected to achieve a grade C or above, with four having the potential to achieve grade A.

In ICT the pupils based at Meade Hill are beginning to make satisfactory progress from a low baseline, although their current attainment at national curriculum levels 1 – 3 show that they have yet to reach their full potential.

A few pupils, particularly those in Year 11, have shown significant progress in attending school from previous non attendance and are engaging in education.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2004:

- **Raise expectations about what can be achieved and improve pupils' achievement by setting appropriate individual learning targets: satisfactory progress has been made.**

Personal development

Attendance has dipped since the last monitoring visit, to 51 per cent. This is a significant reduction since the first monitoring visit a year ago when it was 74 per cent. There is a core of six pupils who are persistent non-attenders. When their figures are not included the overall attendance is 75% which is closer to the national average for such schools. However, it remains too low and too many pupils do not receive 25 hours per week of education. Good strategies are in place to improve attendance. For example, part time programmes are offered as a step towards the goal of full time attendance, vocational placements are arranged to motivate pupils to attend and, for those who are particularly reluctant to attend any education, individual tuition is offered in the home. This flexibility is showing early signs of improving attendance, but there remains a long way to go. Pupils have individual attendance targets and the school publicly rewards them when they achieve these. Over half of the pupils based at Meade Hill have reached attendance of 80% or over, which is an encouraging sign.

Behaviour is good around school. The generally calm environment promotes a positive climate for learning and pupils comment on the improvements they have seen. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and the consistent approach used by staff in managing behaviour is clearly supporting learning. Rewards and sanctions are well-understood by staff and pupils, and pupils were seen to alter their behaviour when they realised that they may lose a potential reward at the end of the week. Staff skilfully encourage the pupils to focus on learning rather than on their own behaviour, as a result the pupils are increasingly taking responsibility for their own behaviour and attitude to learning. There has been a reduction in exclusions since the last monitoring visit, with 33 days lost compared with 47 previously.

Every opportunity is taken to raise pupils' self esteem and self confidence, for example through awards in assembly, and pupils are rightly proud of their achievements. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory.

The pupils are encouraged to adopt safe practices and to lead healthy lifestyles. They enjoy the outdoor activities which are offered through the weekly enrichment programme.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2004:

- **Improve attitudes and behaviour and reduce exclusions: good progress has been made.**
- **Improve the quality of provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural education: good progress has been made.**

Teaching and learning

The school has continued to improve the quality of teaching and it was good or better in five of the eight lessons observed. This is contributing to the improved attitudes to learning and the pupils' progress. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Learning was good or better in four of the eight lessons.

In the best lessons, teachers carefully plan activities taking account of individual learning and behaviour needs. They challenge pupils to do better, at the same time ensuring that they receive effective support so that their confidence is not damaged. Good questioning encourages pupils to justify their points of view and to think more deeply before answering. The pupils become deeply interested in the topics being studied, concentrating for long periods of time. They offer ideas and suggestions without fear of being ridiculed, and enthusiastically ask questions because they want to find out more. There have been improvements in the use of ICT to support pupils' learning. The interactive whiteboards were used well in a number of lessons: for example, in an outstanding humanities lesson it brought humour to the lesson

and captured the pupils' interest. In the less successful lessons, teachers are not as well prepared as they should be and the pace is slower and this allows time for distraction and frustration.

Coaching groups have been instrumental in helping staff to share good practice and reflect on their own teaching. Teaching assistants provide good, effective support for teaching, learning and behaviour.

The pupils know their individual behaviour targets and are beginning to understand how to improve their learning. Assessment has improved, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT and this has led to more accurate tracking of pupils' progress in these subjects. Systems for assessing and reporting progress in the foundation subjects have yet to be developed.

Weekly letters to parents keep them informed about attendance, behaviour, and merits earned. This is good.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2004:

- **improve the level of challenge in teaching and learning so that pupil achievement and attitudes are improved: good progress has been made.**
- **improve pupil learning through ICT: good progress has been made.**
- **improve subject expertise, share good practice and establish team working and collaboration across the federation: good progress has been made.**

Curriculum

At Key Stage 3 the school has rightly focused its attention on developing the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, and ICT and now has appropriate schemes of work in place. Provision for music and religious education is unsatisfactory. The school is just beginning to develop planning for the foundation subjects and has much work to do in this area to ensure that there is an overall curriculum plan which meets statutory requirements and supports pupils' progression in all subjects.

The school has developed the curriculum at Key Stage 4 to include GCSE courses in English, mathematics, science and ICT. There are no opportunities yet to achieve qualifications in other subjects at GCSE or Entry Level. Through the Federation, a wider range of vocational courses is being introduced at the Castlefield site in Manchester: a small number of the current Year 11 pupils from Meade Hill are taking part in these. Good links with further education colleges and training centres enable the pupils to undertake vocational training. Through this, individual pupils are studying for qualifications such as a GNVQ in computer maintenance or NVQ in catering.

Care, guidance and support

The pupils are well cared for and supervised throughout the school day. Lunchtimes are calm, civilised times when staff and pupils eat and chat together. Pupils enjoy the range of lunchtime activities such as computer clubs and sporting activities, which encourage them to develop healthy minds. The calm, professional and respectful manner used by staff promotes pupils' well-being and encourages pupils to adopt high standards for themselves.

This is an outward looking school which successfully develops flexible programmes which are very responsive to pupils' interests. It strives to achieve integration into mainstream schooling wherever possible, and has clear short and long term plans for individuals. The school works closely with families to encourage better attendance and to support learning.

Guidance to support pupils who are moving on from school is satisfactory. The school reports that pupils are well supported by the Connexions adviser. However, lack of clarity about the curriculum at Key Stage 4, particularly in relation to what will be available at the Castlefield site, means that the current Year 10 pupils are uncertain about what they will be doing in Year 11.

Most pupils go on to college or training when they leave, but the school reports that more support is needed to help them sustain these placements.

Leadership and management

Good progress has been made in establishing the senior leadership team and staffing at the school is now more stable. The headteacher has created a calm learning environment in which pupils and staff feel more secure and able to concentrate on teaching and learning. The school harnesses the expertise and support of other schools and providers as well as being part of the Manchester Federation of EBSD schools. It works well with other professionals to provide good multi-agency support for individual pupils and their families. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning and their views are sought and acted upon. High priority is given to improving attendance and the school is rightly expecting this to have a positive effect in the near future.

Regular monitoring of teaching, learning, behaviour and attendance is in place and this is assisting the school in focusing its energies on improvement. A strength of the school is the system of coaching which encourages and enables all staff to review their teaching, to observe each other, and to share good practice.

There have been improvements to the curriculum at Key Stage 4, but there is no strategic plan for developing the curriculum to address the weaknesses, particularly at Key Stage 3.

The school is improving its specialist facilities and resources for learning. For example, it has re-furnished the science room and ICT is now well-resourced. Work is currently taking place to develop the library and a technology workshop.

The school's Action Plan and Exit Strategy is essentially a short term document. Whilst it does include some specific targets, for example in relation to improving attendance, it does not show how the school intends to develop the curriculum and overcome shortages in expertise; nor does it focus sufficiently well on the expected impact on raising standards in the longer term.

The school is fully committed to its role in the newly established federation of provision for pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties across the authority. The Principal has been very supportive of the school and proactive in bringing about improvements. Through the federation, the school benefits from flexibility in staffing arrangements, training and sharing of good practice, and supportive leadership. Opportunities also exist for pupils from the different schools to mix socially. Governance of the school is through the Federation. The chair of governors has a good understanding of the difficulties the school is facing and is providing good support.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2004:

- **improve leadership and management so that there is a strong focus on raising standards and reviewing all aspects of the school's work: good progress has been made.**
- **ensure governance is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met: reasonable progress has been made.**

External support

The LA has continued to monitor effectively the performance of the school, and to provide good advice and guidance, particularly in the core subjects. Support from the Federation has also been good. Regular meetings with the other headteachers and the Principal have begun to establish a good professional network. The sharing of expertise across the Federation has helped to improve the quality of teaching and extend the range of resources and facilities at Meade Hill. The LA intends to provide high level support for the school for a year after it is removed from special measures, but also envisages the Federation increasingly taking over this role.

Main judgements

The school continues to work hard to raise standards, improve the quality of teaching, and improve behaviour and is rightly proud of the progress it has made in

these areas. Its strategies to improve attendance have yet to bear fruit. Much work still needs to be done to develop the curriculum so that it meets statutory requirements and ensures planned progression in all subjects. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

The school has made satisfactory progress since being subject to special measures.

Progress since the previous monitoring visit has been good in parts and satisfactory overall.

Priorities for further improvement

- improve attendance
- develop the curriculum so that it:
 - meets statutory requirements
 - plans for progression in all subjects and supports teachers in reporting pupils' attainment and progress
 - offers a wider range of accreditation at Key Stage 4.
- review the development plan so that it shows clearly how the school is going to improve provision and raise standards both in the short and longer term.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Broomhead
H M Inspector