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Mr M Frost
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Frost

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF WARRINGTON HORIZONS SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 1 and 2 February 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 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

During the visit, six lessons were observed, documents were scrutinised and meetings were held with the headteacher, other nominated staff and a representative from the local authority (LA), who is also a member of the management board. Informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils and samples of work examined.

Context

Since the previous visit, Key Stage 4 pupils have moved into new accommodation with improved facilities. Two new members of staff joined the school in January.

Achievement and standards

The standards achieved by pupils reflect their disrupted educational histories and are generally below expected levels for their age. Progress made by pupils in lessons was never less than satisfactory, although high attaining pupils were not always sufficiently challenged to achieve as well as they can. Pupils take pride in their work, and generally pay attention to its presentation; the work in books is set out appropriately with learning objectives recorded and provides evidence that suitably challenging tasks have been attempted and often completed in lessons.

The move to new accommodation in January proved to be initially unsettling for Key Stage 4 pupils. However, teachers have used improved facilities to enable pupils to develop practical skills in science and food technology as well as the use of a sports hall for physical education (PE). Lessons observed during this visit indicated that pupils have quickly adapted to increased opportunities to learn independently and co-operatively and are making greater progress as a result in developing both self-esteem and basic skills. All pupils in Key Stage 4 have the opportunity to follow courses leading to four passes at GCSE.

Personal development and well-being

A climate for learning has been established because of the sustained actions taken to manage and improve the behaviour of pupils. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory; they understand the code of conduct and respond well to their teachers and other adults, who are generally consistent in their approach to behaviour management. Behaviour for learning continues to be monitored regularly so that targets can be set for improvement; pupils value the opportunity to build up points to recognise their efforts during the week, as well as rewards for meeting weekly individual targets.

Attitudes to learning are satisfactory. In lessons which engaged and motivated pupils, they were keen to answer questions and ask for help to enable them to make better progress. They responded positively to requests to re-focus on their work if their attention strayed. Key Stage 4 pupils report that they enjoy school more now that they are able to participate in practical activities. They particularly enjoyed a recent team-building exercise which allowed them to work in groups to solve problems and develop their self-confidence. Pupils speak positively about their school; in an English lesson Year 7 and 8 pupils spoke warmly about their experiences at the school when preparing a leaflet for new pupils. Key Stage 4 pupils spoke with pride about their new building and were outraged about recent vandalism to the school.

They value the support of adults, with whom they have established a relationship of mutual respect and trust.

Attendance has continued to improve as a result of systematic monitoring managed by the pupil support officer and through close liaison with external agencies, although it remains unsatisfactory overall. In January, attendance reached 94 per cent in Key Stage 3, and in Key Stage 4 it rose to just under 79 per cent. Key Stage 4 pupils have been well supported by guidance from the pupil support officer and have taken responsibility for making their way to the new school building which, for most, involves a greater travelling distance. Punctuality to school has improved; absence is swiftly followed up and pupils are held to account for late arrival.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2004:

- Improve procedures for helping pupils to improve their behaviour, attitudes, attendance and personal development - **good**
- Fulfil its obligations to eliminate racial discrimination and promote good race relations was judged good on a previous inspection – **this area has been fully addressed**

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching was satisfactory in five lessons, which were characterised by a number of good features; and in one lesson it was good. The strengths of teaching included: shared learning objectives and planned activities designed carefully to engage and motivate pupils; enthusiasm for the subject and lively explanations; good use of questions to extend learning; and a skilful balance between support and challenge which encouraged pupils to think for themselves to solve problems. Whole-school training has proved successful in increasing the impact of lesson starters and concluding plenaries to reinforce key learning points. Where teaching was less successful, teachers talked too long and did not give pupils enough time to develop their own ideas, pace was not sufficiently brisk to challenge more able pupils and occasionally the teachers allowed pupils to interrupt them so that the pace of learning slowed. The quality of marking has improved, with comments and grades awarded for effort. However, guidance for pupils on how to improve remains inconsistent.

Individual learning plans identify appropriate targets and success criteria which support personal development, although too few relate to academic progress. A useful range of data is collected about pupils' prior attainment, target grades and progress towards achieving National Curriculum levels in

different subjects which are recorded in pupils' assessment files. However, the school recognises that progress is not systematically tracked over time to assess pupils' achievement, and too little analysis is undertaken of the progress by individuals and different groups to inform planning and accelerate the pace of learning further. Schemes of work continue to be developed to suit the needs of individual and groups of pupils. Full-time education is provided for all pupils and links have been re-established with the local college to increase the range of curriculum opportunities for Key Stage 4 pupils; the local authority has judged that the curriculum meets its policy's specification.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2004:

- Raise the standards of teaching to help pupils learn and achieve more – **satisfactory**
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the specification of the local authority's policy– **this area has been addressed**
- Improve the assessment of pupils' learning and the monitoring of their personal development - **inadequate** progress has been made in the assessment of pupils' learning but **satisfactory** progress has been made in the monitoring of personal development.
- Provide full-time education for all pupils – **this area has been addressed**

Leadership and management

The senior leadership team has been strengthened by the addition of two staff; roles and responsibilities have been identified and a team approach has been established to implement actions which tackle key priorities more effectively. The headteacher has benefited from external support to develop school self-evaluation and to assess the quality of teaching, the outcomes of which broadly match the judgements made on this monitoring inspection. Senior leaders scrutinise the quality of lesson plans and have targeted additional support to strengthen the quality of teaching. The headteacher understands the importance of his role to consolidate the actions taken to secure improvement and build sustainability for the future; he is leading a review of the calendar for monitoring and evaluation to more systematically inform future planning. Subject co-ordinators' files provide a common framework to monitor the work in each area. This helps to hold subject co-ordinators more closely to account during meetings with their line managers. There is a shared commitment amongst all staff to make the necessary changes for improvement and the school has the capacity to improve further.

The management board has been strengthened by the range of expertise of different members of the board. It is kept better informed by the headteacher about progress made and is consequently able to ask relevant questions that hold the school more closely to account.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2004:

- Address weaknesses in leadership and management – **satisfactory**

External support

The school has valued the continued support from the LA and external consultant to strengthen the quality of leadership, teaching and in particular in improving behaviour and attendance. Regular visits by the LA's officers have assisted the school in its move to new premises and also in self-evaluation.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – **satisfactory**

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – **satisfactory**

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop systems to track pupils' progress which inform planning, so that all pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Develop the processes of monitoring and evaluation so that they more systematically support school improvement.
- Continue to develop leadership and management at all levels.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of the management board and the interim Strategic Director for Children's Services for Warrington.

Yours sincerely

Sara Morrissey
H M Inspector