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Mr P Fitzpatrick  
Acting Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Fitzpatrick

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HEYSHAM HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS COLLEGE

### Introduction

Following my visit with Anne Wallis, Peter McKay, Alastair Younger and Andy Margerison, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 7 and 8 June 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 2005.

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

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, pupils, chair of governors and a representative of the local authority (LA).

### Context

Following re-advertisement of the post, the governors have only recently appointed a permanent headteacher, with effect from September 2006. During the autumn term the LA had supported the governing body by seconding a local headteacher with a record of successful leadership. The current acting headteacher was recruited by the LA and has previous experience of successfully managing schools requiring improvement.

The retirement of the previous head of the sixth form has resulted in an internal recruitment for this key post, which will be taken up in September.

### Achievement and standards

As reported at the previous inspection, the standards reached by pupils in Years 9 and 11 in national tests and examinations in 2005 were well below national averages. These pupils made inadequate progress overall. Standards in the sixth form were also below average and too few students made adequate progress.

Since the last inspection measures introduced by the school are beginning to have an impact on standards and, whilst still below average, are rising. The quality of teaching has improved and as a result pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in most lessons, although their rates of progress are not yet consistent across all subjects. Pupils make particularly good progress in performing arts and physical education (PE). For example, pupils say that the teaching in PE lessons enables them to achieve well regardless of their individual skills and talents. In a few lessons, where teaching is exceptionally challenging and engaging, pupils are engrossed in their learning and their achievement is outstanding. Pupils with learning difficulties make the same progress as their peers because they receive constructive individual help from teachers and learning support assistants.

The school has introduced more robust systems for tracking pupils' progress and identifying those who are underachieving. Underachieving pupils are then given extra support to increase their rate of progress. Current assessments indicate that of the 120 pupils who have the potential to achieve five or more GCSE A\* to C grades this year almost all are on track to reach their targets. Results of half-termly assessments generate information which now forms the basis for discussion with parents and pupils at learning reviews. However, this data is not yet being used fully and consistently to set targets and plan future learning.

### Personal development and well-being

As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Nevertheless, there are many signs of improvement. Exclusions have plummeted, falling by a third over the past year. Attendance, whilst still very low, has started to rise. There is a better mood in the school; as one pupil commented, 'A year ago I often felt scared and intimidated at break, now I enjoy myself'. Pupils have commented that a year ago there were several 'no go' areas around the school, where they did not feel safe; now there are none. Nevertheless, the negative behaviour and attitudes of a minority of pupils in a few lessons still slow the rate of learning.

Attendance is being monitored much more closely but a few new ideas have not been fully implemented yet; for instance, the checking of pupils' attendance at individual lessons throughout the day. Consistency in authorising absence is greatly improved and this is highlighting where the greatest problems are. Many systems are still in their infancy and it is too early to judge with certainty how uniformly they

are being implemented or their impact. Even within year groups there is considerable variation in the attendance of different classes. For instance, attendance for Year 11 classes ranges from 73.6% to 88.3%. Observation of registration periods shows variance in the encouragement pupils are given to attend.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and Learning

The school has taken effective steps to establish an understanding among staff of what characterises good teaching and learning. This has begun to have a positive effect so that teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall. This is an improvement since the December 2005 inspection because the weaknesses identified at that time are being tackled.

Most lessons are now clearly structured and teachers' planning includes clearly stated objectives. These are generally shared with pupils at the start of lessons so they know what they will be learning about. This consistent approach ensures that many lessons are well paced. As a result, the rate of learning in most lessons is at least satisfactory and pupils' make steady progress over time. The school is aware that teaching which is merely satisfactory fails to engage many pupils as actively as is required to improve their progress to the rate necessary to make up any lost ground. Over the last few months evaluations carried out by the school and the LA show a steady increase in the proportion of teaching judged good or better, and this view was confirmed by inspectors. The proportion of inadequate teaching has been significantly reduced although some still remains. In these lessons, and on occasions in those judged satisfactory, pupils' learning is hampered by activities that lack imagination and do not reflect the full range of abilities in the group.

Where teachers provide practical or investigative activities, pupils are keen to join in and are enthusiastic about their learning. For example, in a Year 8 science lesson pupils were really excited by an outside investigation into the frequency of plant species. As a consequence, they developed a very good understanding of the key vocabulary and the scientific methods needed to conduct this type of investigation. However, in too many lessons, activities are not sufficiently varied or stimulating to enthuse and inspire pupils or to ensure that all pupils, particularly the more able, are sufficiently challenged. In most lessons, pupils are well managed so that behaviour is good. On occasions, despite teachers' best efforts, negative attitudes by a minority of pupils limit the learning of the whole class. Some teachers involve pupils well in lessons, but overall, too many opportunities are missed to check pupils' learning and to challenge the more able pupils through probing questions and sharply focused marking. In addition, teachers' expectations of pupils' written work are not high enough so books are frequently untidy and do not always reflect their abilities.

### Curriculum

The school has plans in place for 2006/07 to eliminate some weaknesses in the curriculum identified in the December 2005 inspection. Those aspects of citizenship

not covered by the personal, social and health education programme are to be provided by other areas. A cross-curricular audit has identified subjects which will take responsibility for the delivery of specific citizenship objectives.

The sixth-form curriculum will be extended to provide Level 2 vocational courses in travel and tourism, health and social care, media studies and sport, as well as more basic skills courses. However, the school is still considering the best way to provide opportunities for those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not take a discrete information and communication technology (ICT) course to develop computer skills. An audit to identify and co-ordinate cross-curricular provision has not yet been done. There are no plans at present to offer religious education to all students in the sixth form.

### Care, Guidance and Support

The strengths identified by the December 2005 inspection remain. There have also been good improvements in support for the recent influx of pupils who are mainly from eastern Europe. Simple but valuable initiatives such as identifying key words in each subject and translating these are a great help to new arrivals. As pupils become more fluent they are encouraged to help those who are less so. This was seen to particularly good effect in a Year 7 ICT lesson where it helped to improve progress.

Pupils feel that over the past year their views have been listened to much more sympathetically. They appreciate the half-termly academic monitoring sessions where their effort grades are reviewed and help offered if their progress seems to be slipping. Many pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good individual plans to guide teachers in planning work that meets their needs. Every teacher has a copy of these but they are not being used well enough. The school's own lesson observations highlight the fact that on many occasions not enough attention is being paid to planning work which challenges the most able without discouraging the less able.

The school is establishing more effective procedures for checking pupils' progress. In Years 9, 10 and 11 pupils have target levels or grades for all subjects; in Years 7 and 8 they have targets in the core subjects. These targets are based on pupils' previous performance in national or standardised tests against what they should be expected to achieve, and are sufficiently challenging. The modular curriculum allows pupils to be assessed on a half termly basis and a computer-based system for the management of assessment data is under development. Consequently, teachers now have clear information about what is to be expected of individuals and groups of pupils. Pupils' performance is tracked and monitored more closely and underachievement can be identified at an earlier stage. Both pupils and parents are now better informed about progress in relation to targets. However, these developments are at an early stage. The targets set are long term and are not readily understood by all pupils. The system is not presently underpinned by a whole-school marking and assessment policy that is consistently implemented and clearly understood by teachers and pupils. As a result pupils do not receive enough

useful feedback about how well they are doing in relation to shorter term learning objectives.

Other issues to be tackled include the ways in which pastoral staff will be enabled to take an overview of pupils' progress and the more effective use of assessment data to inform teachers' planning.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2005:

- Improve teaching and learning by sharing good practice in order to eliminate unsatisfactory teaching and bring all lessons up to the quality of the best – satisfactory progress
- Establish more robust arrangements for setting pupils' challenging targets and for checking on their progress – satisfactory progress.

### Leadership and management

The acting headteacher's excellent leadership and management skills have successfully built upon the positive start which the school was making in the autumn term 2005. Staff have responded well to an open, honest and collegiate approach. They feel much more involved and informed in the school's development and demonstrate increased enthusiasm and confidence in its future.

The morale of staff at all levels is much improved and the increased sense of belonging and teamwork is having a positive impact on the overall quality of their work. One way in which this is shown is the commitment of a significant number of staff to providing a strong presence on the corridors and around school between lessons to monitor pupils' behaviour. The skills and confidence of senior and middle managers have been developed well as they have been trusted and empowered to use their initiative and take on key roles and responsibilities. For example, staff teams are responsible for leading focus groups on each key action plan, liaising with other staff and reporting back to the headteacher and governors on progress. Good systems are now established to monitor and evaluate the quality of education provided, and senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Middle leaders are now developing their monitoring skills so that they have a clearer picture of the quality of teaching and learning within departments and where improvement is needed.

The recently updated governors' action plan, whilst being particularly lengthy in places, has a strong focus on the school's key areas for improvement. The governors are more aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are developing the capacity to hold it to account for its performance.

While acknowledging that it will take time for the impact of the school's initiatives to lead to improved achievement of pupils, there is an air of optimism and determination which contribute to the school's good capacity for improvement.

The leadership and management of the sixth form have improved since the December 2005 inspection. Although a permanent head of sixth form has yet to be appointed the temporary sixth-form leaders have approached their new roles with energy and enthusiasm. They have put a range of systems in place which are already leading to better tracking of students' attendance and progress. A morning registration system has been introduced and students' attendance at lessons is being more carefully monitored. The school is extending the role of the form tutors so that they are more involved in monitoring students' progress and advising them about future course and career choices. A simple but effective tracking system has been introduced which is helping to identify any students who are underachieving. These students are then given extra help and advice on how to improve their work. As yet there is insufficient rigour in analysing students' prior attainment data in order to set targets for them or to plan their future learning. The planned introduction of the A-Level Performance System (ALPS) is intended to address this weakness. A further range of improvements such as closer liaison with parents and higher education providers, the introduction of a dress code, changes to sixth-form entry requirements and plans to improve sixth-form accommodation are all in the early stages of development and have yet to have a real impact on the overall ethos of the sixth form.

A very positive start has been made to addressing the key sixth-form issues with the introduction of new initiatives which are firmly focused on raising standards and improving achievement. There is now good capacity for further improvement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2005:

- Improve the sixth form's leadership and management, particularly in relation to tracking students' progress and attendance so that underachievement can be identified and tackled at an early stage – satisfactory progress
- Strengthen management and monitoring systems in order to identify both how well the school is doing and what needs to be done to bring about improvement – good progress.

### External support

The LA became aware of concerns about the quality of education provided by the school prior to summer 2005, although measures were only put into place during the autumn term. Since that time the LA has provided effective support to the school. Planned actions are co-ordinated and checked by an allocated adviser from the LA's monitoring and intervention team. The school's assigned adviser, subject advisers and secondary strategy consultants are working effectively alongside senior managers and teachers to strengthen capacity for further improvement. Governors have been supported in writing their action plan, which closely mirrors the LA's statement of action. The LA's plan identify specific actions, resource implications, responsibilities and general timescales. It includes criteria by which the LA will be able to evaluate the impact of its support through a considerable range of monitoring activities. However, the LA's expected date of November 2006 for the

school to come out of special measures is over-optimistic considering that a new headteacher will be in place in September.

### Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Quality of LA's statement of action – good

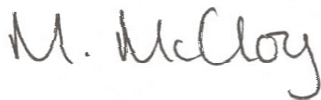
Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that lessons consistently challenge and enthuse pupils of all abilities and provide more opportunities for independent or investigative activities so that a greater proportion of teaching and learning is good or better.
- Consolidate the newly developed assessment and tracking systems across the school, supplementing this with a rigorous marking policy which is shared with pupils and gives them guidance on how to improve.
- Establish permanent sixth-form leadership and enhance the role of sixth-form tutors in order to embed and evaluate the recently introduced initiatives for improvement.

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

Yours sincerely



Marguerite McCloy  
Her Majesty's Inspector