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27 June 2007

Mr Geoff Allen
Headteacher
Westfield Special School
Highfield Road
Bourne End, SL6 5BE

Dear Mr Allen

Ofsted Monitoring of Schools with Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 June 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussion, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass my thanks to the staff, the chair of governors, and the local authority representatives who met with me.

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.

As a result of the inspection on 29 November 2006, the school was asked to look at the following areas of concern: improve staffing, strategic leadership, and the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work; raise achievement by ensuring teachers' expectations are consistently high and by involving pupils actively in learning; strengthen the use of assessment information in day-to-day planning and ensure that pupils are aware of the next steps in learning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement.

Changes in staffing at all levels, a result of robust actions by the governors and local authority, have strengthened the role of the headteacher. He is now well supported by an acting deputy headteacher. Governance has also strengthened with the addition of new parent governors and two other governors with wide experience of mainstream education. Governors recognise clearly that the school has made substantial progress since the last inspection and are now confidently holding the school to account.

The school has made fast progress in setting up structures to monitor and evaluate its work. Observation of lessons is systematic and pupils' classwork and homework are regularly reviewed. Teachers and support assistants have received training on how to assess pupils' performance and track their progress. All staff now adheres to the agreed procedures for recording pupils' progress and for evaluating the impact of behavioural issues on learning. The impact of interventions to bring about improvement is evident in teachers' heightened awareness of any underachievement

and in their classroom practice. Lessons seen during this monitoring inspection were predominantly good. Progress on improving staffing, the strategic leadership of the school and in establishing rigorous monitoring systems is good.

The school's analysis of the pupils' current achievement indicates that around half of Year 6 has made satisfactory academic progress. Pupils' progress in managing their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is good. Exclusions are much reduced and in lessons, pupils generally display very positive attitudes to learning. A significant proportion of the pupils has been able to re-integrate into mainstream education. Pupils are now regularly involved in the assessment of their work. In lessons, most pupils are able to identify whether or not they have met their personal targets. They are confident in using the traffic-light system to identify how well they understand their work and are better equipped to grasp how to improve their efforts. Both pupils and parents are aware of learning targets. This, in turn, is helping to raise teachers' expectations of what can be achieved. The school has made satisfactory progress in involving pupils as active learners and in encouraging consistently high expectations of pupils.

Much of the improvement in the pupils' rate of progress has come about because of the implementation of whole-school systems and procedures for assessing pupils' performance and progress. Lesson planning has improved with teachers taking greater account of earlier learning. Tasks are more effectively matched to the pupils' needs and individual support better targeted. From the data collected so far, the school has clearly identified that pupils underachieve in writing. School-wide improvement strategies are planned for the new school year. Progress in improving teachers' use of assessment to plan lessons is satisfactory.

The local authority's intentions to close the school have been reviewed. Currently, the school is actively engaged in discussions with the authority on its future roll in the light of county-wide plans to re-organise its provision for complex needs. The LA has provided good support for governors through an additional appointment and has supported the school in taking robust action in addressing staffing challenges. Well-judged training is in place for all staff and a consultant headteacher provides regular support for the senior team on developing effective and regular sampling of the pupils' work. Clear guidance from the LA link adviser is supporting the headteacher in tackling underperformance at all levels.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's services for Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan
Additional Inspector