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10 December 2007

Mr K Hollins  
The Executive Headteacher  
Cheadle High School  
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Dear Mr Hollins

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CHEADLE HIGH SCHOOL

Following my visit with Gerald Griffin, Richard Masterton and Michael Shaw, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 28 November 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Andrew Cook'.

Andrew Cook  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF CHEADLE HIGH SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 28 and 29 November 2007

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the executive headteacher, associate headteacher designate, members of the senior leadership team (SLT), groups of students, the chair of governors, a representative from the local authority (LA), and the school's School Improvement Partner.

### Context

Since the last visit, the acting headteacher has been appointed as the executive headteacher taking on the leadership of both Cheadle High and another local secondary school. The school has also appointed an associate headteacher who will take up post in January 2008. The associate headteacher has been working in the school one day a week since September. The school has reorganised the non teaching administrative staff and appointed a new bursar, which has effectively defined roles and responsibilities.

### Achievement and standards

Standards shown by the 2007 tests at the end of Year 9 were broadly average. The GCSE results were also broadly average. Achievement improved over the previous year, but progress in some subject areas remains a concern. Progress improved in mathematics and is now satisfactory because teachers have high expectations of what students can do. In science, progress is slow because department leadership and management are not setting high enough standards for students to reach. The amount of progress students make in English dipped in 2007, but the new head of department has set a clear direction to address known weaknesses. In French, standards are below the national average and higher ability students are not making good enough progress, which is impacting on overall achievement in this subject area.

The school has made good progress overall in providing students with academic guidance so that they know their targets, their progress and what they need to do to improve their work. This has been especially successful in sharing examination targets with students. Good strides have been made in sharing with students their current standards of work so that they know the level of progress they are making. The school has improved the way it sets students challenging targets based on previous examination and test results. This is as a result of the necessary challenge the SLT has given to subject leaders to raise expectations. The SLT are right to continue with this challenge where expectations are still too low. However, there is still work to do where there are discrepancies between targets and progress that are not being resolved by the school. For example, targets for summer examinations are

not adjusted upwards for students who have already reached their target grades in November.

Marking and other feedback to students is improving, but is inconsistent in quality. In a minority of lessons, this is regularly providing clear, specific information about how students can improve their work. In the majority of lessons, feedback is not regular enough and does not always provide the detailed, individual help enabling students to overcome shortcomings in their work. Too often, the teacher has failed to check that the advice given is taken to ensure the quality of work has improved.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- raise standards by providing all students with clear guidance on how to improve in all subjects – good.

### Personal development and well-being

The improvement in behaviour recorded at the previous monitoring visit continues. Year 11 students saw this improvement as a major help to their learning because they can now attend lessons knowing that their progress is most unlikely to be disrupted. They said improvements had come about because everyone knew that sanctions would be enforced consistently and fairly. Good evidence of improved behaviour is provided by the very marked reduction in the number of events leading to students being temporarily excluded. Only three students have been excluded since September compared with 23 in the similar period last year. No incidence of poor behaviour was seen by inspectors.

### Quality of provision

Since the last visit the quality of teaching has continued to improve and this is recognised by students. In lessons, teaching was often good and otherwise satisfactory. A very small proportion of lessons observed were outstanding. Lesson planning has become more secure, with teachers clearer on lesson aims. Teachers were more aware of the importance of learning and of the need to understand the extent to which students understood and remembered facts and ideas. The clarity of lesson aims and the validity of learning activities meant that students behaved well in class, understood what they were asked to do, and participated actively in the tasks set. They interacted politely and confidently with their teachers and tried to succeed. Even in those lessons where activities were not challenging or so interesting, students' attitudes to learning were positive. Most lesson planning recognised that not all students in the class learn at the same rate and teachers usually specified some additional support for those who find learning more difficult. However, many teachers did not identify alternative activities that would stimulate and challenge those students who learn quickly or who find ideas easy to assimilate. Quite often these students were offered similar work after completing the main learning task, rather than alternative activities that would have been more appropriate to their needs. Also, some of the support offered to students with learning needs and/or disabilities did not directly address the conceptual difficulties they were experiencing. This mismatch between some of the work planned and the capacity of students

meant that progress in these lessons was slower. In many lessons effective techniques were used that required all students to participate and to demonstrate their individual understanding. This was recognised by their teacher, who was then able to adapt teaching to ensure learning continued. However, such good practice was not sufficiently widespread to secure maximum achievement in all classes.

Students report that the setting of homework is now more consistent and that the school insists that it is done. Homework tasks set are worthwhile learning activities.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- improve teaching and learning by using the outcomes of assessment to plan work of appropriate difficulty for all students – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

Following the last visit there has been an effective determination by leadership and management to focus on what action needs to take place to improve the school. This action has come about through the excellent strategic and motivational leadership of the executive headteacher, supported by the newly appointed associate headteacher. In a short period of time he has reorganised the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team, a priority identified for further improvement at the last visit, and encouraged the school to have a confident sense of purpose. This reorganisation has led to a much higher level of accountability and ensured that the roles of the SLT members work in a complementary way as part of overall leadership and management. Through this reorganisation, the headteacher has been able to demonstrate very high expectations of staff and the school is clearly now on track to improve further.

Because SLT members now have clear roles and responsibilities, they have been given the task to prioritise and impact on key areas of the school's work. They are now more aware of the school's strengths and analytical of weaknesses. The demands now put on them are greater and there is evidence that there is a growing buoyancy and level of effectiveness. What has yet to be seen is the impact of their work over a longer period of time which could more easily be measured in improved teaching and learning. Therefore, some of the weaknesses in provision they have identified have still to be resolved and any progress made needs to be carefully monitored.

Middle leadership is also being held to account more. Heads of department are evaluating the effectiveness of provision and have written action plans. These action plans vary in quality and some are too vague in identifying what will actually improve teaching and learning and how impact will be measured.

The governors have had a major reorganisation which has put them in a stronger position to hold the school to account and undertake their governance role more effectively. There is now a new chair of governors who is fully aware of the school's recent history and is clearly focused on supporting and challenging the school. It is early days to see the impact of these changes as many of the new committees have not yet met.

The recent target for all teachers to develop the use of assessment strategies during lessons is evidence of the determination of the leadership to drive improvement across the school. This whole school approach has required the school to deal with areas where practice needs to improve and has set clear expectations for all staff. This is a good example of how the bar has been raised for all staff which is resulting in the inconsistencies in the quality of their work reducing. Although there is evidence that the school has made good progress in this area, the SLT are aware that more of the good practice that takes place needs to be disseminated.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- reduce inconsistencies in the work of staff by setting clear expectations for the management of behaviour and the quality of teaching – good.

### External support

The school has an effective working relationship with the LA. The work of the LA has been successful in supporting the appointment of both the executive and associate headteacher, and also in the appointment of a new chair of governors. Under the leadership of the headteacher, and as the SLT have become more confident, the school has been able to request LA support that has been effectively tailored to its developmental needs. For example, the LA has provided good advisory support on improving assessment strategies. Likewise, there has been a good level of monitoring of teaching and learning by the LA officer attached to the school.

As well as support from the LA, the school has begun to draw on expertise and guidance from the Specialist Schools Trust. Making the most of the collaboration with Westwood College, various initiatives are being looked at whilst the school is also taking advantage of training and advice on offer.

### Priorities for further improvement

No further priorities were identified.