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29 October 2007

Mr A Pearson  
Headteacher  
Maidenhill School  
Kings Road  
Stonehouse  
Gloucestershire  
GL10 2HA

Dear Mr Pearson

### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF MAIDENHILL SCHOOL

Following my visit with Howard Dodd, Additional Inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 October 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 November 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to approval by Ofsted.

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 Children's Services for Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Mary Harlow  
H M Inspector

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 10 and 11 October 2007

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, four middle managers, two groups of pupils, four governors, the school improvement partner (SIP) and a representative from the local authority (LA). They attended one assembly and looked at pupils' work.

## Context

Following the first monitoring visit in May 2007 two assistant headteachers were appointed to the school, together with a significant number of new teaching staff. The school continues to have difficulties recruiting permanent staff, particularly in English, mathematics and science.

## Achievement and standards

The 2007 end of Key Stage 3 test results in English, mathematics and science show an overall improvement on the 2006 results with an increase in the percentage of pupils reaching the nationally expected Level 5. In science the higher attaining pupils exceeded their targets and reached Level 6 or above. Nonetheless, a significant proportion of pupils still make insufficient progress from Year 7 to Year 9 and this remains a concern. Standards overall continue to be below average in the core subjects, and in English and science a considerable number of boys are still underachieving. In mathematics the picture is more positive.

Results at GCSE in 2007 show a mixed picture. There are pleasing results in catering, dance, drama, food technology and geography where students met their targets. However, there is still inadequate progress in English, mathematics and science where standards remain below average. These subjects, alongside others, have been beset by staffing and recruitment difficulties in recent years. This has resulted in pupils being taught by a succession of different teachers, which has had a detrimental effect on their progress.

The school has further developed its tracking system to assess and monitor the progress of pupils against their targets. This, together with improved teaching and pupil behaviour, is raising their achievement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- improve standards and pupils' achievement, especially for the average attaining pupils, in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory

## Personal development and well-being

The headteacher and senior team continue to work tirelessly to improve the pupils' behaviour and good progress has now been made since the previous inspection. The new 'behaviour for learning' policy, which was introduced expertly and with an infectious enthusiasm by an assistant headteacher, is starting to make a strong contribution to these pleasing improvements. Overall, behaviour is now satisfactory; at times it is good. Indeed, it was a pleasure to witness the courteous attitudes of the 'student guides' as they showed prospective parents around the school. And they did so with great pride. Moreover they appreciated the responsibility afforded to them and rose admirably to the challenge on this important occasion.

Most staff are embracing this initiative in an encouraging way and several are growing in confidence to assume greater responsibility for monitoring behaviour, particularly in the cramped corridors and spaces around the school. This too is a welcome development, as is the increasing consistency in the way challenging behaviour is managed successfully in lessons. In most of them, staff work exceptionally hard to implement the policy to arrest the low levels of disruption that arise. Some are developing skilful strategies to halt unnecessary interruptions and misdemeanours quickly to ensure the learning of most pupils continues at a swift pace. This good practice now needs to be shared with all.

Nonetheless, stubborn pockets of unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes to learning still exist, particularly when teaching lacks imagination and is uninspiring. Frequently, these characteristics are displayed by disaffected boys and on occasions they impact adversely on the progress of compliant girls. Senior leaders recognise that more needs to be done to tackle disaffection in creative and innovative ways. Pupils value the efforts the school has made to improve behaviour and report that it is improving. That said, they acknowledge that a number of pupils exhibit unacceptable levels of behaviour which disrupts the learning of their peers.

The referral room is well organised and the support staff are working effectively to intervene sensibly in lessons and when pupils are excluded. They are an enthusiastic, committed team and possess collectively a range of valuable expertise. Pupil mentoring is thorough and conducted in a skilled, sensitive way. Systems for collecting and analysing data are developing well and being used to monitor incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour assiduously.

Staff receive good support and training, elements of which have been particularly innovative. The drama workshops, designed to promote an understanding of the new behaviour policy, are a fitting testament to departments working together to seek creative solutions to challenges.

Over the first five weeks of this term, attendance has averaged 91.5%. This is a significant improvement on the overall figure for the summer term, although it is still below average. The Year 7 pupils' attendance is particularly good. A substantial proportion of absence during the summer term was attributable to parents taking their children away for holidays. The school is now adopting a much tougher stance.

Senior leaders are also using assembly time sensibly to reward good attendance and to emphasise its importance in achieving well.

Although there have been good improvements in the pupils' behaviour, there has been an increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions. This is not a contradiction. It is because there are now clear and consistent expectations of behaviour and persistent disruption is not tolerated.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- significantly reduce the poor behaviour of the minority of pupils – good

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning in lessons continues to be monitored in a rigorous manner. This, together with a thoughtful professional development programme, is leading to pleasing improvements in pupils' learning. The weekly in-service training sessions designed for staff to reflect on their practice are well received. Although it is early days, green shoots are now emerging in lessons showing improved teaching. The newly appointed deputy headteacher has conducted a number of surveys with pupils and teachers with an aim to influence the professional development programme.

A greater proportion of lessons are now good or better but poor behaviour manifested by a minority of pupils is still impeding progress in some lessons. Pupils report that the lessons they enjoy most are those where the teachers give clear explanations, plan interesting tasks which excite them to learn and give them responsibility. Most lessons follow a good, three-part structure with appropriate starter activities to engage the pupils and a plenary session to assess their understanding. Lessons that are dominated by the teacher, at the expense of the pupils taking responsibility, lead to passive and disruptive behaviour.

The quality of marking is improving but is still too inconsistent across the school. At times it is inadequate, with no guidance given to pupils on how to improve.

Pupils are now better informed about their individual targets and appreciate the additional support such as mentoring and revision workshops designed to help them perform better.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that the variations in standards in different subjects are markedly reduced – satisfactory

### Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior management continue to provide strong, energetic and decisive leadership; all are working exceptionally hard to bring about improvement. Indeed they are relentlessly determined to raise standards and they possess an

impressive team spirit to do so. The new deputy headteacher has made an excellent start and already is making a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning. All the assistant headteachers are embracing their exacting roles with a refreshing appetite to make a difference for the better.

Systems to analyse performance data and assessment to identify underachievement are now robust and senior leaders, expertly led by the seconded deputy are tracking the pupils' progress assiduously. The involvement of subject leaders in this work is improving but there is some way to go to develop most as highly skilled leaders of learning. Monitoring and evaluation continue to be robust at a senior level; they now need to be swiftly developed at middle management level to strengthen the capacity of the school to improve at the fast rate required.

The recently appointed head of performing arts possesses a clear vision to raise the profile of the school's specialist status and is leading this development enthusiastically. Overall standards and achievement are good in the performing arts, as is the quality of teaching and learning. These subjects are popular with the pupils; of those who gained 5 A\* to C in the 2007 GCSE examinations, half had followed GCSE courses in dance, drama or music. The time is ripe for the department to lead and support improvements across the school, as evidenced in their good work with the behaviour support team. Interesting projects linking the performing arts with English and humanities are currently being planned.

The governing body are growing in confidence to hold the performance of the school to account; they are more informed about its work and are taking their collective responsibility seriously with enthusiasm. The appointment of additional governors has strengthened their capacity to support and challenge appropriately.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- make better use of assessment information and monitor the school's provision systematically and rigorously to improve performance and standards – good

#### External support

Since the previous monitoring visit, the secondment of the deputy headteacher has been extended until the end of the autumn term 2007. She continues to make an impressive contribution to improvements. Such high calibre support at this senior level remains necessary until new senior leaders have had sufficient time to develop their roles. More importantly, the leadership capacity of the middle managers needs strengthening considerably. The school continues to value the support received from the LA consultants and now appreciates the intervention at a more senior level. The new SIP and the leader for 'Intervention and Challenge' are providing excellent support to the senior leadership and management of the school which the headteacher and governors welcome.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Strengthen the capacity of the middle managers to develop their leadership roles

- Ensure the school's specialist status is used more extensively to bring about improvement