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7 May 2008

Mr S Pavitt
The Headteacher
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Dear Mr Pavitt

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF LONGSPEE SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 16 April 2008, 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 November 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not 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 Children's Services for Poole.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF LONGSPEE SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 16 April 2008

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and talked with the staff, pupils, parents/carers, governors, the School Improvement Partner, representatives from the local authority and a National Leader of Education who is working with the school in a consultative capacity.

Context

At the last inspection the current headteacher had been in post for two months. The leadership team has been strengthened by the appointment of a deputy headteacher and the development of the roles of the two assistant headteachers. A behavioural support team has been formed and staffing changes have been made to the outreach services to facilitate a new curriculum pathway for pupils in Key Stage 3. The school is currently in consultation with staff over the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Responsibility structure, focusing on the development of subject leadership through Lead Learners.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards have been improved by increasing the use of individual pupil learning targets in lessons. In the classes visited during the inspection all teachers made good reference to them. In some cases the targets were not challenging enough and the relationship between them and the individual pupils' education plan was not sufficiently clear. In all the classes seen work was planned to meet the needs of each individual pupil.

The academic progress that pupils make in Key Stage 3 is still not good enough. In particular, standards in science continue to be hampered by the lack of specialist equipment and facilities, although the arrival of an equipped portacabin is imminent. The range of work that can be undertaken in physical education is also still limited due to a lack of specialist facilities and restrictions in outdoor space.

Since his appointment in January 2008, the deputy headteacher has developed and implemented a new system to record and monitor the progress that pupils are making towards their targets. This, alongside the benchmarking of pupil starting points, is proving to be an effective mechanism to show where improvements have been made and where more work needs to be done. As a consequence, assessment practice has improved so that the school has a more accurate view of the progress that pupils are making. The continued use of the regular assessments will provide teachers with the means to guide planning more effectively, and the school as whole with the means to judge the impact of its interventions.

One class, as part of a trial, is using 'target teams' to help assess learning. The aim of it is to help pupils to understand how and what they need to do to improve their learning and behaviour. In this class, groups of pupils have been placed into 'target

teams' who, with adult support, help each set their own challenging targets for behaviour and learning. These targets are then recorded and displayed on pupils' desks so that they are in constant view as a reminder. Pupils then record with coloured stickers the progress that they have made towards reaching their targets. This use of monitoring and assessment is giving very good feedback to the pupils about their success and also shows them what they need to do to reach the target as well. Whilst this style of assessment is very new, the impact that it is having on pupil achievement in this class is outstanding.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection November 2007:

- raise achievement and standards through more rigorous monitoring and better use of assessment to inform lesson planning – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

The new system that is being used for monitoring pupil academic progress is also being used to monitor behaviour. Here it is already being used to show where patterns of intractable behaviour occur and where interventions need to be deployed. The programme has been designed so that it is easy to use by all staff. The data generated can be used as part of a pupil's individual behaviour plan to record progress. But, it can also be used to look at clusters of behaviours so that the school is in a position to diagnose and adjust behaviour management accordingly. Whilst it has only been in place for a short period of time, it is already making a discernable impact as a tool for the management of pupil behaviour.

In the classes visited, and in the general movement around the school, pupils' behaviour was good or better. Pupils demonstrated courtesy to each other, the inspector and the staff. In one class they felt comfortable to go to pupils in different year groups to ask for assistance with their work. Teachers and other staff managed inappropriate behaviour well. In discussion pupils said they felt safe at school and that there were far fewer times when they were held or needed to be held. This view was shared by their parents. School data also shows a continued reduction in physical interventions and exclusions. In general, the school is a calmer and more settled environment where there are fewer disruptions to learning.

Pupil attitudes to work have improved since the last inspection. Pupils said they enjoyed coming to school more now that lessons were more interesting and practical. They particularly enjoyed their food technology lessons and understood the need to eat healthily but would welcome more pasta and fewer pilchards on the lunch menu!

The school has worked hard alongside parents/carers to ensure that attendance has improved. The newly introduced breakfast club was appreciated by parents/carers and they said that they felt very welcome in school. Older pupils with a history of absenteeism have found it much harder to change.

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

- improve behaviour by implementing more effective policies and procedures to engage pupils more in their learning – outstanding
- raise attendance levels by working more effectively with pupils and their families and carers – good.

Quality of provision

The school has made some good progress in improving the curriculum offered to pupils in Year 9. It now offers increased support for those pupils who are being integrated back to mainstream school, as well as providing a more suitable alternative for the others. This change has already greatly improved the quality of the curriculum provided by the school and pupils have responded positively. Nevertheless, the restrictions on the curriculum due to the lack of adequate resources for physical education and science mean that pupils are not getting the full education that they deserve.

Lesson observations conducted by the school, School Improvement Partner and during the inspection indicate that the quality of teaching and learning has continued to improve.

The resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have also been improved. In some classes seen during the inspection not enough use was made of ICT to enhance pupils' learning. The school is not currently exploiting the way that ICT can be used by pupils to record their understanding in other subjects, for example through voice activated software, recording work through pictures and video, or classroom based computers.

Some of the furniture in the school is not big enough to comfortably accommodate older adolescents.

The future destinations of pupils currently in Year 9 have been assured. However, the provision for those pupils moving into Year 9 in September remains unclear.

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

- increase pupils' motivation by improving curriculum opportunities, especially for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and by seeking to clarify pupils' future destinations – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has been a driving force in moving the school forward. He has the confidence of the whole school community and the local authority. He is now ably supported by a strong leadership team who have clear areas of responsibility. This and the other newly formed teams have a great capacity to be able to improve the quality of education that the school provides. Whilst also very new, the significantly improved arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are being used well to guide the planning for further improvement.

The school is still in the process of restructuring its middle leadership. Consequently, subject leadership is an area that is still being developed.

Governors have a much clearer picture of the strengths of the school and areas that need to be developed. Through their action plan they are monitoring the improvements that are being made, supporting and challenging the senior leadership team.

External support

The local authority has provided good quality support for the school. The statement of action that was put into place after the last inspection is proving to be successful. The school action plan and governors' action plan both interlink with it, this is helping them to monitor the progress they are making as well as being able to see which actions have made the most impact for improvement. However, the plan still does not state in enough detail the financial resources that have been allocated in order to make an accurate judgement with regard to value for money.

The National Leader of Education who is working with the school has an expertise in supporting children and young people designated as having behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties (BESD). The school has benefited greatly from his support and from the School Improvement Partner who also has expertise in this area of special educational need.

Priorities for further improvement

- In order for the school to be able to prioritise for the future it needs to have a clearer understanding of its place in the local authority's longer term strategic plan for supporting children and young people designated with BESD.