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Dr Stephen Rogers
Headteacher
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Dear Dr Rogers

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HEADLANDS SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SCIENCE COLLEGE

Following my visit with Anthony Pearson, John Paddick, Brian Dower and Mary Sewell Additional Inspectors to your school on 8 and 9 July 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 February 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to discussion with the lead inspector.

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, chair of governors and the Director of Lifelong Learning at East Riding of Yorkshire LA.

Yours sincerely

Cathryn Kirby
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF HEADLANDS SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SCIENCE COLLEGE

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 July 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the substantive headteacher, the executive headteacher, the affiliative deputy headteacher, other senior staff, subject leaders, a group of teachers, two groups of students, the chair of governors and two representatives from the local authority (LA).

Context

In May 2008 the headteacher of South Hunsley School was seconded to Headlands School in the role of executive headteacher. This arrangement has been agreed for a period of 36 weeks. A deputy headteacher from the same school has also been seconded in an affiliative role until the end of the summer term, 2009. The LA has agreed to fund the post of affiliative deputy headteacher for a period of three years. The school has specialist status in science and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

The most recent test and examination results, those from 2007, were reported in detail in the February 2008 inspection report. These results show that students' progress in Key Stage 3 is broadly satisfactory although they achieve less well in mathematics and science than in English. Progress in Key Stage 4 and the standards reached by 16 year olds shows a declining trend between 2005 and 2007.

The executive headteacher and affiliative deputy headteacher quickly took the lead in introducing a number of interventions to support the learning of specific groups of students in the few weeks prior to the 2008 external examinations. The short lead-in time is likely to limit the effect of these initiatives on outcomes for students. However, they have laid the foundations for raising standards throughout the 2008/09 school year. Much work has been done to develop systems to make use of assessment information and track students' progress. The data show that students at both key stages are on track to meet the school's targets. However, the school has concerns over the security of some assessment judgements and acknowledges that historically targets have been insufficiently challenging. Aspirational targets have been set for 2008/09.

One impact of recently delivered staff training has been a better understanding of how well students are doing. Time has been allocated for subject leaders and their teams to meet formally to monitor and assess the impact of their work on students' progress and plan more effectively to address weaknesses. These initiatives are recent so time is needed to demonstrate their impact on standards and achievement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2008:

- Raise achievement and standards across the school – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is beginning to improve. There has been a decline in the number of students who have to be removed from lessons for misconduct. Students themselves report that behaviour has improved and school is generally calmer. The school is recognising good behaviour through a rewards system which will be fully operational at the start of the autumn term. There are a large number of students, however, whose emotional and social problems prevent them from integrating fully into school routines. This is manifest in low-level disruption in lessons and on occasions, as the school's record show, aggressive remarks or behaviour. The school is providing for these students' needs through the work of the Oasis unit, but the numbers it can accommodate are limited. Consequently, there are students whose needs are not being fully met. The work of the inclusion unit is successful in providing a breathing space when problems arise but has yet to show that it can make inroads into helping students long-term. The LA has been slow in supporting the school in its work to address unsatisfactory behaviour.

Under the new management structure many staff have recognised the need for change. Learning Tutors have been proactive in the creation of and training for a peer mentor group. Students appointed as peer mentors wear their eye-catching uniform tops with pride.

Students' punctuality to school and to lessons has improved because of a drive on the part of staff to meet and greet students at the school gates and to insist on a prompt start to lessons. Attendance remains stubbornly just below 90%. On the first day of the monitoring visit attendance was low at 88%.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2008:

- Ensure systems to improve behaviour are effective and are applied consistently – satisfactory

Quality of provision

The overall quality of teaching is not strong enough to ensure that students make adequate progress in their learning. However, since the previous inspection, extensive monitoring of lessons has given leaders and managers a fairly accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of classroom practice. This has led to some improvements. For example, students are met at the classroom door, the planning of lessons is better and they usually begin promptly and purposefully. The outcomes of monitoring have been used to identify weaker teachers and to target intensive support and coaching.

During the monitoring visit 34 part lessons were observed. Of these, one was outstanding, 14 were good, 12 satisfactory and 7 unsatisfactory. Therefore, whilst some improvement is evident there is far too much variation in the quality of

teaching and learning. In the better lessons, the students are attentive and fully engaged because they are interested and want to do well. These lessons tend to be characterised by good planning, clear crisp instructions, and a variety of approaches and activities which interest the learners. Relationships, organisation and the management of students are all good and lead to a productive classroom atmosphere. However, in weaker lessons the pace of learning is frequently too slow. This is often because teachers tend to dominate proceedings and have not planned a sequence of activities designed to interest and fully engage the learners. As a consequence, students tend to become inattentive and waste time. Sometimes they misbehave because they are not fully occupied. Meeting the needs of a wide ability range is often inadequately addressed in lesson plans.

Some of the general and specialist accommodation is tired and in need of refurbishment. These teaching areas do little to inspire young people or encourage those with indifferent attitudes to school to readily engage in learning.

The school is beginning to develop a more coherent approach to provision for students who have particular needs by bringing together separate strands of provision. This has been welcomed by the managers concerned. Key to planning for the next academic year has been improved understanding of and access to assessment information. The criteria for using this information to target support and monitor the progress of individuals and groups have been more sharply focused.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2008:

- Eliminate all unsatisfactory teaching and improve the proportion of good teaching – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The executive headteacher has given a much needed strategic direction to school improvement work. Together with the affiliative deputy headteacher she has begun to develop an appropriate climate in which to launch the agenda for change. Their accurate assessment of the weaknesses in provision has informed a robust action plan. The energy and purpose injected into school improvement work has gone some way to counter the relative inertia before their arrival. The newly established review group has been successful in bringing together key stakeholders including governors, members of the extended senior leadership team and LA officers in a productive forum. A systematic review of the progress of actions intended to improve provision has shown some early gains, for example, punctuality has improved, internal exclusion has reduced and, so too, has staff absence. Better use of data from monitoring activities is helping leaders and managers to form a more accurate view of provision and outcomes. In the case of attendance, however, the use of data is not sharp enough to improve the persistently unsatisfactory attendance.

Expectations have been raised. Challenge has been balanced with good access to training and development through the links with South Hunsley School. Early indications suggest that many staff are responding well to these opportunities and are growing in confidence. Links with senior leaders have improved and lines of accountability strengthened. Middle leaders feel that there is now a sense of purpose

and direction to the work of the school. Nevertheless, consistency in the application of whole-school initiatives and the rigour of monitoring classroom practice is too variable.

The substantive headteacher is leading the work on providing the necessary support and challenge to staff where performance is a cause for concern. He acknowledges that the impact on the wider provision of the twin specialisms of science and mathematics is limited to date. Plans are in place to raise the profile of the school's specialist status in the autumn term.

Much of the work undertaken since May, including the realignment of roles and responsibilities of senior staff, has established a framework on which to build further improvement in the autumn term.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2008:

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – satisfactory

External support

The LA's well-considered decision to second two senior leaders from South Hunsley School has provided the leadership necessary to enable the school to secure improvement. However, the LA has been slow to offer robust support to the school in its efforts to address long-term concerns around behaviour. The LA action plan was judged unsatisfactory by Ofsted. Whilst the concerns highlighted have been addressed and the revised plan is satisfactory, the amended version arrived at the school only the day before the monitoring visit. The content had not been shared with the school.

Governance has been strengthened by the LA's initiative to appoint three additional governors. An officer of the LA attends meetings of the newly convened review group. The LA has chosen not to co-opt a senior officer onto the governing body. Core subject leaders speak highly of the work of the National Strategy consultants. Inspectors did not see the impact of this work reflected in the quality of teaching and learning observed on this monitoring visit.

Priorities for further improvement

- The school should continue to implement, review and evaluate, the well considered and appropriate actions contained within the action plan.