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Mr Chris Lloyd  
The Acting Headteacher  
Southall School  
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Dear Mr Lloyd

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Southall School

Following my visit with Nina Bee, Additional Inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 September 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 – inadequate.

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 Telford and Wrekin.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson  
H M Inspector

## Special measures: monitoring of Southall School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 September 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the acting headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.

### Context

The substantive headteacher has been absent due to ill health since April 2008. The acting headteacher was previously the deputy headteacher of the school. One member of teaching staff retired at the end of the summer term. A new teacher and two new teaching assistants took up post in September 2008

### Achievement and standards

In too many lessons expectations of pupil progress are not high enough and therefore pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. There are examples where pupils make good progress in lessons. In English this is supported well by planning that includes clear levels of prior understanding. These are reviewed regularly and help staff to identify when pupils are struggling or if they need more challenge. Moderating and levelling of work have recently started at the school and, as a result, information collected is becoming more reliable. The school has an electronic collection of more detailed progress data but this has been collected without moderation. Technical problems prevented inspectors from analysing the data.

Last summer approximately a third of pupils were entered for tests in science at the end of Key Stage 3; all but one achieved Level 3 or above. A small group of pupils was entered for assessment in mathematics; most pupils entered achieved Level 3 or above. At the end of Key Stage 4, a high proportion of pupils left with accredited achievements in ASDAN and or entry level AQA modules. The school has not analysed these results on an individual level to ascertain if the pupils made sufficient or good progress across each of the key stages.

Whole school data for mathematics and science have been analysed by different groups but this does not provide sufficient detail to make sure all pupils are being challenged. The way in which data are analysed does not take into account pupils' starting points, age and previous progress. Information is not sufficiently robust to help teachers plan challenge effectively or for the senior team to track pupils in order to identify the effectiveness of interventions and support. Nearly all pupils had a placement in education, employment or training when they left the school in July

2008 and for those that did not the school had at least ensured contact with a Connexions advisor.

### Personal development and well-being

Behaviour has improved since the inspection in February 2008 but remains inadequate as there is still too much behaviour that disrupts learning. Pupils are pleased with the improvements and many commented on the better behaviour but also reported there were still times when it was not good enough. During the inspection, most pupils were polite and welcoming and many were keen to show their work. In order to help improve behaviour the school has increased adult supervision and intervention. Less formal times during the day are generally calm as a result. Intervention at this high level is a sensible first step in the learning process but does reduce opportunities for pupils to manage their own behaviour and develop their independence.

The school has established a clear code of conduct known as the school values. The process successfully involved pupils and staff. Some pupils are keenly aware of the values and adhere to their boundaries well. Others are still not able to do this. Staff are clear about values but are inconsistent in their approach to ensuring the levels of agreed acceptable behaviour are met. When tutor times are used well there is good rehearsal of the values. At times, this work is heavily reliant on talking with little use of additional cues to help pupils access and process spoken language. This hampers learning for those pupils who find spoken language difficult to process and remember.

Recent changes to the support base for pupils with additional needs have improved the planned way in which additional support is offered for a few pupils. The additional targeted support has effectively enabled a few pupils to improve their behaviour and there are reasonable expectations for the pupils involved to re-integrate into the rest of the school. The short term part time timetables have not always been agreed by the local authority.

Whole school attendance is satisfactory. There are groups with inadequate attendance and last year there were too many with attendance below 85%. It is very early in the term but already some pupils have missed too much school. The system for first day calling is robust and an administrative officer checks the reliability of records on a weekly basis.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve pupils' behaviour by insisting that all staff use effective behaviour management strategies consistently and provide pupils with a clear code of conduct for them to uphold – satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning are inconsistent. Too many lessons are inadequate. There have been improvements in planning and the structure of lessons is usually appropriate. Planning supports staff to identify levels at which pupils are working and how to match work to different needs. However, in practice, in too many lessons work is not sufficiently well matched to the needs of the pupils or their prior learning. In the best lessons, teachers have a good knowledge of how pupils learn and provide interesting activities that help pupils access the curriculum effectively and learn the next steps. All staff in these lessons are rigorous in their ongoing assessment and adapt lessons accordingly. When support staff are well used, they make a considerable contribution to learning and the ability to work in smaller groups makes sure pupils have good opportunities to be actively involved throughout the lesson. In other lessons, insufficient attention is given to ways in which pupils learn and there is a lack of variation in the level of challenge given to different pupils. In some lessons, supportive structures, for example symbols and visible key words, are not evident to help pupils. Where learning is less effective teachers frequently talk too much and learning activities do not support the intended outcome or ensure all pupils are actively engaged in learning.

The changes made to groupings within the school and the new timetable arrangements have helped to support pupils with autistic spectrum disorders to feel calmer within lessons. The move from five lessons to four is popular with the pupils when the longer lessons involve a range of types of learning.

The changes to the curriculum have not been sufficient or rapid enough to make sure that all lessons are challenging pupils of all abilities. Support strategies are not used consistently and there are too many examples where particular needs are not provided for by the way in which the curriculum is offered. The reshaping of the Key Stage 3 curriculum, to offer a more flexible and creative approach, is in the early stages. The planning is not yet providing a framework for ensuring sufficient challenge and support for all abilities when it is being taught.

All the pupils have individual targets and some of them know these and can identify when they are making progress. In the best practice, teachers and tutors revisit the targets frequently and at the same time ensure pupils remember and understand why they have them as well as what they are. Targets are not written in the pupils' language or in accessible forms for those that cannot read all the words. In lessons, teachers explain what pupils are going to learn and most have some recall of learning at the end of the lesson. In most instances this is through spoken language and not always at a level that can be understood by, or involves, all the pupils in the class.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure performance data are analysed regularly so that they can be used to inform self-evaluation, set challenging targets and improve teachers' planning – inadequate

- improve the curriculum provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders so that they can all achieve to the best of their ability, particularly the more able – satisfactory
- improve pupils' knowledge of their own learning so they are clear about what they need to do to improve their work and are helped to make better progress – inadequate.

## Leadership and management

Monitoring remains inadequate. It has been slow to start and there has not been enough for the current leadership team to evaluate the outcomes of what they have introduced. There has been limited monitoring of lessons. Systems for monitoring behaviour have changed and therefore improvements over time for those pupils who find behaving within the school boundaries difficult are not clear. There has been very limited monitoring of pupils' progress in a way which enables the senior team to challenge the progress made. The analysis of performance data to inform self-evaluation remains inadequate.

The current senior leadership team has increased the pace of improvements in the last few months but progress has not been fast enough since the inspection in February 2008. The team is working under capacity and the support put in by the local authority, particularly for the acting headteacher, has not met the needs identified in the Ofsted report or the local authority's own audit. This has reduced the capacity of the school to improve.

The action plan has identified the necessary systems and structures to be put in place but has not made a clear link between these and outcomes for pupils. Success criteria lack milestones that enable staff and governors to evaluate regularly how effective the changes have been for pupils. There has been variable success with regard to completing the actions identified in the plan and many have been deferred within the original time scale.

Two experienced governors, appointed by the local authority, and governor training have helped to improve the governors' knowledge of their expected roles in the evaluation process. Further training has been booked to ensure governors have the right skills to help with the monitoring processes. Clearer systems and structures have been put in place but so far outcomes of these changes are not evident. The challenge offered by governors is becoming more robust.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels, ensuring that senior leaders have sufficient time to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning and to lead improvements in their areas of responsibility – inadequate.

## External support

The local authority action to provide for key areas of training and support for the school has been slow and limited in its effectiveness. There have been some good contributions, for example help with developing the approaches to managing behaviour, but others have not helped the school to improve fast enough. The acting headteacher and senior team have not received the training they need to start monitoring activity including lesson observations. There has been limited support to help the team learn how to monitor the quality of the learning experience for pupils or to challenge rigorously the progress made by pupils with different levels of ability. The support commissioned by the local authority from the National Leaders in Education programme did not meet expectations, required improvements from this support were not addressed quickly enough, and input was left to drift for too long. There is still no additional support in place to increase the capacity of leadership and management at the school. This is a matter of urgency and the local authority has an interview with a prospective candidate arranged in the very near future.

The action plan has been updated following comments from Ofsted. The local authority makes it clear that until a few weeks before the inspection in February 2008 they had not identified any concerns about the school. The local authority action plan has been improved and more explicit support is recorded. Some actions identified in the plan have not taken place within the timescale outlined. The plan still lacks key milestones and quantifiable criteria about the outcomes for pupils by which the local authority can evaluate and judge the effectiveness of the support offered. The local authority has identified April 2009 as the target date for the school to be judged as no longer requiring special measures. This is over ambitious and does not reflect the level of improvement required by the school or the rate of progress so far.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Amend the action plan by adding success criteria that reflect the desired outcomes for pupils and clear milestones that assist rigorous self-evaluation.
- Start regular monitoring of the outcomes for pupils as a result of the actions taken.