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Mrs Lynn Key  
The Headteacher  
Burwood School  
Avalon Road  
Orpington  
BR6 9BD

Dear Mrs Key

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Burwood School

Following my visit to your school on 12 December 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2008. 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.

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 & Libraries for Bromley.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Charlton  
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Burwood School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 12 December 2008

### Evidence

The inspector observed the work of the school, scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, the senior management team, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

### Context

Burwood is a special school for boys aged 7 to 16 all of whom have a statement for emotional and behavioural difficulties. The vast majority of pupils are aged over 11. Since the last monitoring visit, one of the assistant headteachers has been confirmed in post and a new assistant headteacher has been appointed who will take up his post in April 2009. In addition, two newly qualified teachers have been appointed to replace staff who have left. All aspects of the school's provision were considered at this visit, with particular focus being given to standards, achievement, teaching and learning.

### Achievement and standards

The school's systems for setting targets and tracking progress for all pupils continue to be refined and developed. These now provide good quality management information to help raise standards, both for individuals and cohorts, by setting realistic and challenging targets. Good training is being given to all staff about how to use such information but, owing to their inexperience, they are not using it consistently to drive up achievement. Considerably more pupils were entered for nationally recognised qualifications in 2008 than in recent years. The attainment of pupils improved considerably compared to 2007, and all attained entry-level qualifications in a range of subjects and GCSE grades in mathematics. Consequently, all leavers were able to continue their education or move into employment. Given their starting points, which were well below average, this represents at least satisfactory achievement for these pupils. Lesson observations show that all pupils are on track to meet their targets, with a number doing better than this.

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour, attendance and attitudes to their learning continue to improve. Pupils show much greater awareness about what is expected of them in managing their own behaviour. This has improved the ethos in the school, which now provides a much more purposeful learning environment. Pupils indicated that instances of poor behaviour are now managed well because staff apply the behaviour policy in such a way as to be 'hard but fair'. Attendance has improved again so that, this term, over half of the pupils have attendance rates over 90%, with a few achieving 100%. All pupils have made significant improvements in their attendance compared

to that at their previous schools. These improvements are the result of good work done by the school, the effectiveness of its rewards system and the local authority's educational welfare service input. The rewards system is highly valued by pupils and is seen by them as a very positive incentive. The school has made effective use of home tuition and e-learning to motivate and re-engage pupils. This is having a positive impact, but there is still a small core of persistent non-attenders who do not appreciate the benefits of coming to school regularly. For some of these pupils, their non-attendance is condoned by parents and the school is taking appropriate action to address this. Pupils indicate that there are now very few instances of bullying or racial harassment and they now feel safe and secure.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- establish effective systems to improve attendance and deal with bullying and racist acts – satisfactory

### Quality of provision

The recent teaching appointments have improved the overall quality of teaching and learning so that there is now little which is inadequate. This is due in part to the effectiveness of the systems to monitor teaching and learning, and to the good quality training given to new staff. These improvements have been confirmed by monitoring from the local authority advisers and an external consultant. Staff now interact purposefully with pupils to develop their confidence and self-esteem. However, due to inexperience, teachers' planning often focuses on delivering subject content at the expense of identifying and addressing the needs of individual pupils. In an outstanding personal social and health education lesson, the teacher set very high expectations. She made extremely good use of self- and peer assessment, as well as recording, to motivate and engage all the pupils to produce of their best. This practice is not yet consistent and, consequently, pupils do not always get help to identify what they need to do to reach the next grade or level.

The curriculum for younger pupils is broad and well matched to their needs. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, there is now a good range of vocational and work-related programmes linked to more academic subjects. The large numbers opting for these courses indicate their popularity. The school is carefully monitoring the progress of pupils on these courses to ensure they will be successful.

The stability in staffing is reflected in the more effective support which is given to pupils through the pastoral care system. The school is rightly reviewing its provision for personal, social and health education, particularly through links with registration time and the breakfast club, to ensure that the best use is made of the time available.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- develop the curriculum to meet the needs and interests of learners of all ages – satisfactory

- develop suitable induction, professional development and support for staff to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning – satisfactory

## Leadership and management

Through the recent staffing appointments, the school is now in a secure position from which the headteacher can drive forward her vision for the future. Senior leaders have used monitoring information well to gain a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and to give governors the information they need to act as the school's critical friend. However, these developments are too recent to have had their full impact on raising standards and achievement. The school's partnerships with the local authority, external agencies, parents and the local community continue to improve. The present success criteria, which the school is using to judge its effectiveness, have given it a sound basis for developments to date. However, managers at all levels have recognised the need to sharpen the focus to provide more precision in setting and monitoring targets, to maintain the pace of improvement and ensure that all pupils achieve their best.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- increase its capacity to improve by establishing high quality leadership – satisfactory
- devise and implement the systems and practices needed to monitor, evaluate and assure the effectiveness of its work – satisfactory
- improve its partnerships with parents, the local authority, external agencies and the community – good

## External support

The local authority has continued to play a very effective role in helping the school to improve. Good support has been provided to develop the skills of teachers, and the local authority has acted quickly to support the headteacher in developing her senior team and in appointing new teachers. The School Improvement Partner and the external consultant have provided effective support and helped to give the school the confidence it needs to move forward.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Refine the criteria against which to judge the school's performance to give greater precision to the school's monitoring systems.