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Ms B Logan
The Headteacher
Southall School
off Rowan Avenue
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Telford
Shropshire TF4 3PX

Dear Ms Logan

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Southall School

Following my visit with Jeffery Plumb to your school on 29 and 30 June 2009, 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 February 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 – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to the following qualifications:

- draft induction arrangements are approved by the monitoring inspector
- the identified mentor has been judged as teaching good or better lessons over the last year and has the capacity for taking on this additional responsibility supported closely by the headteacher.

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 local authority, 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 third monitoring inspection on 29 and 30 June 2009

Evidence

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

Context

The headteacher at the time of the last visit has resigned. The experienced headteacher seconded to assist the school has been appointed as permanent headteacher from September 2009. Two members of the teaching staff were absent during the inspection, both of whom have been absent for some length of time. One teacher, who is a member of the senior management team and lead for English, was on maternity leave. One member of classroom support and one administrator have also been absent due to ill health for some considerable time. The associate headteacher finished his work at the school in April. During the inspection there were no pupils in Year 11 present at the school.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement has continued to improve in lessons and more pupils are making good progress over time. Good progress in lessons occurs when pupils' needs and learning priorities are accurately identified by staff using careful assessment across the curriculum areas. Data are useful in helping to identify levels of achievement in subjects where there is robust moderation, including work with other schools. In English and science the majority of pupils are making at least satisfactory progress. Moderation in mathematics where there is no external accreditation has improved but is less robust than other core subjects. In mathematics lessons progress is variable and some pupils report that they think their work in this subject is too easy. Work scrutiny demonstrates very variable progress across other subjects. Intervention put in place by the school for pupils identified at risk of underachieving has had mixed success. For some it has been very positive and progress has increased, for others there has not been a significant change.

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour in lessons during the inspection was usually good. Year 11 pupils had left school the week previous to this visit and two groups of pupils from across year groups were out of school on a trip on the first day. Occasionally there was some low level disruption when the pace of the lesson did not challenge the pupils sufficiently. There were also some isolated instances where pupils found it difficult to respond to expectations but, when this occurred, it was managed well by staff and so did not disrupt learning for other pupils. Staff are using the agreed code of

conduct and system of rewards and sanctions 'The behaviour way' more consistently. There is now greater emphasis given to precise and frequent praise in most lessons and at more informal times during the day. Records of incidents involving particular pupils are being monitored effectively and for most there has been a reduction following successful intervention. The Southall team around the child approach (STAC) for pupils with more complex emotional and social difficulties has been effective in identifying additional support required including work with external professionals. The vast majority of pupils involved have made positive progress as a result of well targeted intervention. Pupils attending the learning support unit have made good progress and, when given the right support structures, have been able to reintegrate into the main body of the school either full time or for an increasing time.

The length of fixed term exclusions has reduced and there have been fewer overall than for a similar period in the previous year. Very few pupils receive more than one fixed term exclusion. Pupils and parents report positively about the changes in behaviour and consider the school to be much calmer.

The number of pupils with very low attendance has reduced. Intervention by the school, particularly developing personalised curriculum packages, has helped a number of pupils to attend more frequently.

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 – good.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement (introduced at last visit):

- establish more robust strategies for helping pupils to attend more regularly including ensuring curriculum developments help to engage pupils from a wide range of abilities – good.

Quality of provision

Teaching has continued to improve, helping more pupils to make good progress. Pupils are more engaged with their learning where lessons are well planned and they are given a mixture of interesting activities. In the best lessons the level of work and pace of teaching are varied for different pupils, enabling all to be challenged according to their ability. Many staff use a skilful mix of humour and encouragement alongside clear expectations in lessons which helps different pupils engage in learning and builds their confidence to try new or more difficult work. Support structures for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are more consistently used, although in some lessons adult language levels are still too complex. In a few lessons, where teachers have less confident relationships with pupils, pace is often too slow. This often occurs when explanations are kept the same for all pupils rather than enabling some to get on with their work more quickly while giving time for additional explanation to others. Similarly, when teachers do not use assessment accurately to target work according to the pupils' levels of understanding and prior



knowledge, progress is slow. Occasionally additional support given to pupils hampers their progress as work becomes too adult led.

Progress in curriculum development has been good. The range of vocational options is growing and for many pupils this has helped them re-engage with education. Plans for more and higher accreditation opportunities from next September are in place. The structure of the curriculum is developing good links between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The emphasis for different routes to accreditation has been recognised and development begun. Opportunities for enterprise closely linked to real life skills are underdeveloped. Developments in mathematics schemes of work have been satisfactory but are still somewhat hampered by staffing issues. Planning for an additional support 'hub' for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in consultation with parents and involving a parental steering group has been successful. It will be in place from September. There has been satisfactory progress in making sure pupils understand how to improve their work. Some of the systems introduced to support this and track progress against targets are too complex. School staff agree with inspectors that the system needs simplifying so that it is more effective. 'Passports to success' have been developed with some pupils and these usefully identify pupils' strengths and areas where pupils would like, and need, more help.

At the time of this inspection safeguarding procedures met requirements.

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 – good overall (satisfactory for improving teachers' planning)
- 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 – good
- improve pupils' knowledge of their own learning so pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work and are helped to make better progress – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Good progress has been made in monitoring the quality of lessons. The strengths and areas for improvement are accurately identified. Sometimes reflection on lessons emphasises the role of the adults too much rather than having a detailed focus on the progress and learning of all pupils in the class. Regular analysis of data about achievement, attendance and behaviour has helped improve evaluation which is now more reliably based on outcomes for the pupils at the school. Action is taken more swiftly when issues are identified, than in the past. The recent planning of alternative curriculum packages for some current Year 9 pupils is a good example of this. Staff training about how to help pupils behave more appropriately and for ensuring more suitable provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders has helped improve practice, although some inconsistencies remain.

Increased capacity of the senior leadership team (from the associate headteacher) for a few months following the last visit contributed to creating a clear way forward. The new headteacher has helped to establish a positive culture of change and staff are better equipped to work together in support of improvement. Progress of the action plan is monitored carefully and the leadership team is becoming more effective in identifying priorities requiring attention. Additional governors and training for existing governors have helped to raise the level of understanding about the school. Governors have a greater ability to challenge and support developments.

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 – good (this area is also reported in the quality of provision aspect)
- 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 – good.

Other areas introduced at the first monitoring visit are no longer required as priorities.

External support

External support is good and has increasingly become better targeted as the school uses more accurate evaluation to identify priorities. Regular input from local authority advisers and the School Improvement Partner has ensured the senior team is supported and challenged in taking forward the action plan for improvement. Other consultants from the local authority have also helped improvement. For example, the regular availability of a member of staff from the behaviour support team has enabled individual staff at the school to work with a skilled colleague and thus improve their own practice. The mathematics consultant has also offered significant support while the coordinator for this subject is absent. This has been valuable in identifying the priorities for development in this area.

The secondment of an experienced headteacher, who has since been appointed as substantive headteacher, has made a considerable improvement to the school's capacity to improve. Additional leadership capacity provided by the associate headteacher for a few months helped establish a more detailed monitoring and evaluation system. In September, new staff including teachers are due to take up their posts at the school. Induction plans are at the very early stages and the level of necessary support for this has not been identified.

There are no additional priorities for improvement.