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11 June 2009

Mr D Griffin
The Headteacher
Dyson Perrins CofE High School
Yates Hay Road
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Dear Mr Griffin

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Dyson Perrins CofE High School

Following my visit with Paul Canham and Richard Masterton to your school on 3 and 4 June 2009, 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 January 2009. 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.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Worcester and the Director of Children's Services for Worcestershire.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Dyson Perrins CofE High School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 June 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the associate headteacher, the school leadership group, groups of students, the heads of faculty for English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), members of the school's teaching and learning development group, the chair of governors and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous inspection in January 2009, the local authority has put in place loose federation arrangements with a local successful school. The headteacher of Nunnery Wood High School has been appointed as an associate headteacher. Senior staff from Dyson Perrins and Nunnery Wood High have been working together since February 2009.

Achievement and standards

Standards are rising. In lessons, standards range from above average to below the national average. The school's assessment information for Year 11 shows that the percentage of students expected to achieve five or more GCSE grades at C or above including English and mathematics is likely to be higher than last year, when it was well below the national average. Similarly, a higher proportion of students are expected to attain five or more GCSE grades C or above in English and mathematics than previously. The proportion of students attaining two or more GCSE grades C or above in science is also set to rise. These improvements at the end of Key Stage 4 are the result of better systems for tracking students' progress coupled with carefully planned interventions strategies for individual and groups of students. These tracking systems and interventions have recently been introduced throughout the rest of the school. As a consequence, they have not yet had time to make a significant impact on standards in all year groups. For instance, the most recent assessment data shows that, although progress is accelerating in Year 9, standards in English, mathematics and science are not as high as they should be.

Evidence from lesson observations indicates that overall rates of progress have improved. The majority of students are making satisfactory progress because of improvements in the quality of teaching. In many lessons the more able students were capable of making faster progress.

Progress since the last inspection:

- accelerate students' progress and raise the standards they attain – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Students' behaviour is generally good. Relationships between students and staff are positive. In lessons students cooperate readily with their teachers and their attention only wanders if they are not given sufficiently interesting or demanding tasks. Any misdemeanours are dealt with through a clear whole school code of procedures. School attendance is satisfactory. Absences are followed up promptly as are incidence of lateness to school or in classes. Students are keen to contribute to school life and there are many ways in which they do this: serving on the school council; mentoring and befriending other pupils; and, through working together for charitable causes.

Quality of provision

The senior leadership group, in collaboration with local authority consultants and senior staff from Nunnery Wood High school, has established a support programme for staff which includes opportunities for staff to share the good practice that exists within the school. This work has led to an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection when it was judged to be inadequate. The quality of teaching and learning now ranges from good to inadequate. Just under a third of lessons seen by inspectors were good, two thirds were satisfactory, and the remainder were inadequate. This does not match the more positive findings of the recent local authority review when the majority of teaching was judged to be good or better. There are not enough consistently good or better lessons. As a result, the progress that students are making is not as fast as it could be.

Improvements have been made to planning and the lesson structure, with all staff identifying and sharing of learning outcomes with students at the beginning of lessons. Staff are beginning to make better use of assessment information to match activities to the needs of the different abilities. While tasks for the average ability and those who need additional support are now generally more appropriate, the activities for the more able students continue to lack challenge.

In the most effective lessons, there is a good balance between small group, independent and whole-class activities that capture the students' interest. Teachers also effectively develop students' knowledge and understanding by asking probing questions. For example, in one physical education lesson, students responded well to a lively pace and a wide range of teaching methods that successfully focused on building on previous learning and meeting the needs of the different abilities. As a consequence, students made good progress. In the weaker lessons, the pace of learning is often slow because activities lack challenge and students listen passively while teachers spend too much time talking.

Systems for analysing students' progress have strengthened. Students told inspectors that they particularly value the regular assessments and progress reports which have been introduced since the inspection. This is because they now know

their current level of attainment and the levels they are working towards. These are positive developments and are beginning to raise students' expectations of what they can achieve. However, the Key Stage 3 teachers' assessments of the students, and particularly the more able students, are not sufficiently accurate. The assessments do not always represent a true reflection of the attainment levels consistently demonstrated. Inspectors found examples of assessments which underestimated the current attainment levels of students and end of key stage targets which were not sufficiently challenging.

The guidance that students receive is inconsistent. Students occasionally benefit from detailed comments about their work, along with good guidance on how to improve. However, teachers' marking varies between classes and subjects and it does not consistently give students clear guidance about how to improve their performance. Poor presentation and misspelling are too readily accepted in some classes.

Progress since the last inspection:

- ensuring that teaching is closely matched to all students' needs and challenges the average and more able students fully – satisfactory
- using targets to raise students' expectations of what they can achieve and giving them clear guidance about how to improve their performance – inadequate.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leadership group have successfully maintained good staff morale. There is a shared commitment and enthusiasm amongst staff to raise standards and improve the conditions for learning. Extensive work has been undertaken to clarify roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers at all levels. For example, the new procedures for middle leaders include detailed guidance about when and how to monitor the work of their department. This has given middle leaders a clearer overview of standards and helped them to become more aware of the contribution they can make to whole school improvement. While the many necessary changes to leadership practice have been effectively implemented, the impact of these has yet to be reflected in significantly improved standards throughout the school. The school is in the process of introducing a more consistent approach to evaluating the work of each department.

The systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school have improved since the inspection. The school has introduced a systematic schedule for monitoring the work of teachers. Regular and objective monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by senior staff is now accepted and valued. Information from lesson observations, assessment information and the analysis of students' work is enabling members of the senior leadership group to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision and take appropriate action. This has led to recent improvements in the quality of teaching and the progress of students. Middle leaders are beginning to use this information to identify the actions which need to be taken to improve provision

within their departments. The written feedback to staff, following observations and the analysis of students work, is not sufficiently rigorous. Teachers are given areas for improvement, but these are not prioritised. Neither does the feedback state when the points for improvement will be reviewed and evaluated to secure the required changes. Sometimes, the evaluations following monitoring place too much emphasis on the actions taken by the teacher and not enough on the impact of the teaching on the progress made by students.

School improvement planning is sound. The timescales and actions identified are suitable and reflect the school's most pressing priorities. However, the success criteria are not always measurable and do not make enough reference to students' progress and the quality of teaching.

Governance has strengthened. The governors are now better informed about the quality of provision and standards reached by students. Governors have set up a working party to review their roles and responsibilities. They are aware of the need to establish a governing body structure that will enable them to more effectively monitor and evaluate the work of the school.

The school is using its subject specialism well to enrich the curriculum. Students told inspectors that they enjoy their learning in physical education and the range of clubs the school offers. These include dance, martial arts, rugby and cheerleading. The school was awarded the Sports Mark in January 2009.

Progress since the last inspection:

- clarifying the roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders and ensuring that they understand and are held accountable for students' standards – satisfactory
- rigorously evaluating the impact of teaching on students' progress and taking swift action for improvement – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has provided the school with an appropriate level of support. Despite the more positive findings about the quality of teaching and learning in the school, the advice from consultants and the school improvement adviser has been accurate and suitably focused on the priorities for improvement. This has helped to improve provision. The local authority's strategy of linking Dyson Perrins with a local successful school has been positive. The school's leadership capacity has been strengthened and senior staff have benefited from the opportunities to work together to develop their existing practice. The local authority has agreed to further revise its original statement of action and ensure that the actions shown in the action plan are distributed more equitably across the timescales that the school is anticipated to be a category of concern, clearly state how it will support the school to better meet the needs of the more able students, and identify the different personnel that will be involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Confirm the accuracy of teacher assessments at Key Stage 3.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching.