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Ms Margaret Peacock  
Headteacher  
Elliott School  
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London  
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Dear Ms Peacock

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Elliott School

Following my visit with Michael Milton and Robert Smith, additional inspectors, to your school on 9 and 10 February 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures is satisfactory. Newly qualified teachers may be appointed at this stage in the department of modern foreign languages and mathematics, with the relevant support in place.

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 the interim executive board and the Director of Children's Services for Wandsworth.

Yours sincerely  
Meena Wood  
Her Majesty's Inspector



## Special measures: monitoring of Elliott School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 February 2010

### Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the school's work through observing lessons, a review of documents and pupils' work, and met with the headteacher, senior and middle managers, groups of students, and two representatives from the local authority.

### Context

Since the last monitoring visit in September 2009, the school has continued to experience staffing turbulence in certain areas of the curriculum. The senior leadership team has now stabilised, comprising three deputies and four assistant headteachers with joint pastoral and academic responsibilities. The school has experienced staff changes in its middle leadership team in the areas of information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics and modern foreign languages, and this has led to some instability in provision and outcomes for students. The executive headteacher, who took up post in June 2009, is headteacher of Chestnut Grove School, a Leadership Partnership School, and continues to work four days at Elliott School. A substantive headteacher has now been appointed to join the school by April 2010.

The interim executive board continues in its support of the school, and, in addition, there is a partnership that meets regularly, comprised of representatives from the local authority, London Challenge advisors, and other sources of external support from Graveney and Chestnut Grove schools. The school's plans to achieve Trust Status as a National Challenge Trust School with Ernest Bevan and Chestnut Grove Schools are firmly in place. When the school has attained Trust status, it will continue to benefit from the excellent leadership skills of the current executive headteacher, as it is envisaged that she will be appointed as Chief Executive of the Trust.

The school continues to face considerable challenges that include a falling roll and a constrained budget, largely due to the falling roll; although, since the last visit, morale amongst staff and students has much improved. Plans are in place to commence Building Schools for the Future works in 2011.

### Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The school evaluates students' attainment as broadly within national averages and the quality of students' learning and progress as satisfactory. Inspectors found a more variable picture. According to the school's own data, while the school has shifted to setting more rigorous targets for pupils based on three levels of progress,



as opposed to Fischer Family Trust Data (FFTD), students in Year 11 are not currently predicted to meet the challenging five A\*-C GCSE including mathematics and English, targets set for them, but are broadly projected to attain the FFTD targets or slightly exceed these. However, current Year 10 students, whose only target is based on three levels of progress, are on track to exceed the five A\*-C GCSEs and almost on track to attain the five A\*-C GCSEs (with English and mathematics). Progress data for Years 7, 8 and 9 demonstrate that progress is improving year on year. Indications are that there is better progress this year than last year with students in Year 7 making better progress than those in Years 8 and 9. Within these headline figures, there are significant variations between the core subjects with students in science and English making significantly better progress than in mathematics.

The school continues to have a strong focus on targeted interventions for students who are underachieving. However, monitoring of students at the additional subject revision and consolidation sessions reveals that only 30%-50% of students attend these. Although the school has involved parents and carers in this process, staff have not yet emphasised the mandatory nature of these sessions, so that all students who need to attend, do so. Assertive mentoring continues for all students identified as underperforming, along with support and targeted interventions for Year 11 students from London Challenge consultants. The impact of this continues to be monitored by the school, but owing to the non-attendance of some of the students at intervention sessions, not all of them originally predicted to attain a grade D or below, are now effectively working at grade C level.

Managers have focused much more systematically on appropriate teaching and learning strategies in the classroom and emphasise the use of students' performance data by teachers in planning activities and tasks. This has improved considerably since the last visit. All lessons observed by inspectors demonstrated clear lesson planning with learning objectives. However, the quality of the lesson planning of activities and tasks in line with students' abilities and levels vary significantly from subject to subject and within subjects. In science and English lessons, inspectors observed lessons where students were making satisfactory and good progress and often attaining the standards they should in line with their potential. But in mathematics, information and communication technology, and modern foreign languages, expectations of students are low and the pace of teaching and the content and staging of activities are often pitched inappropriately. In these lessons, more able students are not challenged and those that need greater support are not given sufficient help to complete tasks successfully.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- ensure that students' progress is effectively monitored using accurate information so that all students make at least the progress expected – satisfactory.



### Other relevant pupil outcomes

Students' attendance is at national averages at 92%. The impact of the full-time education welfare officer and more rigorous follow up of absence by tutors has resulted in reducing persistent absence even further to 5%, since the last visit. This also testifies to the current attendance policy that emphasises the increased responsibility of tutors to meet with students individually during the morning tutorial time to follow up academic tracking and pastoral issues. However, a minority of students were observed by inspectors not to appreciate the importance of punctuality to lessons. The behaviour management policy with both parents and carers and managers involved in the process has been successful in reducing exclusions.

Although low-lying disruptive behaviour in lessons has decreased, where this happens, it is usually because teachers do not plan activities and tasks that sufficiently engage students. Additionally, in modern foreign languages lessons, older students have too many gaps in their knowledge and skills, and lack the confidence and problem-solving skills to work independently on the tasks set. As a result, these students get restless, when disengaged and insufficiently challenged. However, staff and students affirm that all aspects of behaviour have much improved, in most subjects, since the last visit. Behaviour around the school is now much better than at the last visit, with a greater staff presence in corridors at movement times, to facilitate speedier and safer arrival of students in lessons.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- devise, and implement consistently, attendance and behaviour management policies in order to improve attitudes to learning – good

### The effectiveness of provision

Since the last visit, robust monitoring and support systems that focus on teaching and learning are beginning to have an impact. However, lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work showed that the intended impact of these on students' learning and progress has yet to be seen across all subjects. In addition, support staff are not always involved closely enough in the planning of in-class support in all cases, and do not always work effectively with individuals and groups of students.

The school is fully aware of the areas of particular weaknesses in the curriculum. In information and communication technology, the school has tried to develop teachers' capacity in improving the quality of teaching, but is short of subject expertise in its staffing base. The school's pilot of the BTEC qualification is more suited to students' interests and abilities and is being successfully taught. A significant proportion of students are developing collaborative skills and they are predicted distinctions in their outcomes. In science, students were observed developing investigative skills. However, in mathematics, weaknesses observed at last visit continue, as very little



use is made of everyday contexts in enabling students to understand how to transfer their skills and knowledge to real-life situations. In many lessons observed, there was too much teacher talk, copying from the whiteboard and limited opportunities for students to engage in paired and group work.

Across all subjects, with a few exceptions, too little use is made of assessment activities that can inform teachers of the progress that individual students are making and very little use is made by teachers of assessment activities to check students' learning before moving on to the next activity or input. These characteristics were evident in a significant proportion of lessons observed during the inspection, of which a sixth was deemed inadequate, with the majority as satisfactory. A greater proportion of lessons were judged as good than at the previous monitoring visit and a smaller proportion were judged as inadequate. In the good lessons observed, especially in English and science, students were more aware of what they needed to do to progress and improve their work. Assessment processes underpinned the planning of learning so that students were challenged and well supported and aspired to higher levels of attainment.

The English department has developed new schemes of work that incorporate the assessing pupils' progress framework. While some good practice was observed, the use of this to enable all students to work at their own levels is not yet consistent in all lessons and the school has not yet fully embedded strategies to share and disseminate this good practice to other core areas in the curriculum. Assessment for learning across subjects is still at early stages of development. Through work scrutiny and discussion with pupils in lessons, a number of older students with well-below average reading ages displayed poor literacy skills. Although a promising start had been made to address this through the literacy programme in the Year 7 transition curriculum, this initiative has not yet been extended across the school and year groups.

The quality of feedback students receive in class is still inconsistent. Academic guidance now has improved since the last visit, but across one third of subjects, still lacks a consistent foundation in the accurate assessment of students' learning. Scrutiny of students' work revealed the positive impact of the school marking policy but the area that the school needs now to focus on, is ensuring that all students know what they need to do to improve in their written work. Even where marking is helpfully detailed, teachers do not consistently ensure that students catch up on work missed or redraft work as necessary. Not all students know what they need to do to reach their targets in individual subjects, although Year 11 students, when questioned, showed greater awareness of their specific areas of improvement during this visit, than the last one.

Progress on the area for improvement:

- ensure that teaching meets the full range of individual needs in all lessons, so that all students are engaged, motivated and enabled to make good progress –satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The senior leadership team, skilfully led by the executive headteacher, has continued to transform the academic and pastoral ethos of the school and create a positive team spirit amongst staff through further embedding of polices. This has consolidated improvements and the speed of these improvements, in some areas of the school, has been impressive, for instance, in science and English. However, the critical challenges faced by the school in its recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced teachers and, more importantly, middle managers in information and commmunication technology, mathematics and modern foreign languages, have significantly impeded progress in these subjects.

The senior school leadership team's actions have successfully ensured greater awareness by middle leaders of accountability and good self-evaluation skills, and most heads of department, with support from senior leaders, are able to identify challenging performance targets for their subjects. Rigorous internal reviews, initiated by the executive headteacher, with external support from the local authority, and in the case of modern foreign languages, with specialist linguistic input from the Central Institute for Languages Teaching, have successfully identified the strengths and areas for improvement in all subjects. Tracking of students' achievement continues to be strengthened through observations of teachers and work scrutiny undertaken by heads of department, as part of a revised assessment policy. In the last year, advanced skills teachers have supported and modelled teaching and learning working alongside staff. Owing to reduced staffing, this is not, however, sufficiently embedded and the school needs to focus on developing greater capacity in its teaching and managerial staff, through greater inter-department support and systematic peer observations.

Strengthened quality assurance systems are now in place. These focus much more on the quality of assessment that lies at the core of teaching and learning, and there is now a good shared understanding in the school's team by quality assurers about the criteria used to judge learning and progress.

Setting higher aspirations for staff and students is now the case through the school's challenging targets in all subjects based on the three levels of progress from key stages two to four. The school's self-evaluation of the progress it has made to date is accurate and evaluative and gives a fair description of the school's position at this point and the challenges it faces in the coming year. By the time of the next monitoring visit, the school will need to demonstrate the impact of its actions in ensuring rapid improvement, firstly, in the area of assessment and the impact of this





on accelerating students' learning and progress, and secondly, and most critically, through strengthening middle leadership, capacity and teaching expertise in the weaker areas.

### Specialist school status

The school's specialist status in modern foreign languages, owing to staffing shortages and weaknesses in provision, has not been well developed since the last visit.

Students in most language lessons are still not developing the necessary confidence and oral skills that they need for successful outcomes and most are not sufficiently challenged to attain the higher levels of which they are capable, although students in Years 7 and 8 make better progress than those in older Years. An acting head of department has been in post since November 2009. She has effectively steered forth significant improvements within the department such as schemes of work, marking schemes and better implementation of the behaviour policy. The deputy headteacher with senior leadership and responsibility for this area has provided good support and challenge for staff.

However, the department lacks significant capacity in good languages teaching and assessment expertise. Students' progress as tracked against FFTD targets is satisfactory in French and inadequate in Spanish and German. The number of hours available to teachers to teach the QCA units is insufficient to ensure that students can make the progress they should, to be successful. Therefore, the current GCSE-based curriculum will not enable all students to pass. The school urgently needs to review the appropriateness of the curriculum in line with students' abilities and needs and to seek alternative, more flexible and achievable accreditation. Teachers do not use learning strategies that foster the active use of language skills, nor do many lessons generally develop greater student confidence, enjoyment and progress in learning. The use of the school's valuable resource, its teaching assistants, is not helping students develop oral and listening skills, and currently, there is no scheme of work or accountability for this area of work. The Language College is still an important contributor to the local authority's plan for extending modern foreign languages in primary schools and this aspect of the provision is developing well.

Progress on the area for improvement:

- involve managers, staff and students in clearly focused actions that address areas of identified weakness – good.



## External support

The local authority has provided good strategic and operational support since the last visit and has taken steps to facilitate the setting up of the Trust Status for the school to enable it to have greater support. The statement of action in relation to its impact is now much more demonstrable and is being monitored very effectively by the schools' executive headteacher and the local authority adviser.

## Priorities for further improvement

- To improve learning and progress across all subjects through ensuring
  - that teachers and support staff consistently plan learning activities to suit their students' capabilities and prior attainment across all subjects.
  
- To improve assessment and academic guidance through
  - providing an effective range of activities that assess students' understanding throughout the lesson and inform the next stages of learning
  - ensuring that all students know what they need to do to improve in their written work and can improve their literacy skills
  - ensuring that students catch up on work missed or redraft work as necessary to minimise gaps in skills and knowledge
  - ensuring that all students know precisely what they need to do to improve on their targets
  
- Strengthen middle leadership, management and staffing capacity, through the local authority and the Trust Status, in those areas that have been identified as weak: modern foreign languages, information and communication technology, and mathematics.