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Ms Ann Dudgeon  
The Acting Headteacher  
The Coleshill School - a Maths and Computing College  
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Dear Ms Dudgeon

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Coleshill School

Following my visit with Sue Aldridge and Bamber Loizou, additional inspectors, to your school on 10 and 11 March 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2009. 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 appropriate training and mentoring by the partner school.

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 and the Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Families for Warwickshire.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton HMI  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of The Coleshill School – a Maths and Computing College.

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 March 2010

#### Evidence

Inspectors observed 50 lessons, all conducted with members of the school's senior management team. They scrutinised updated and amended development plans, local authority (LA) records of visits and the LA evaluations of the support provided for the school. Inspectors met with the acting and executive headteachers, middle managers, five groups of students, a group of the four parents seen every visit to monitor their perception of the changes since the last visit, the chair of governors, and a representative from the LA.

#### Context

Since the last visit, four staff have left the school and six have joined. The close collaboration has continued with Caludon Castle School in Coventry. Some of the senior posts, for example two deputy headteachers and two assistant headteachers, have been appointed. Whilst vacancies in key roles have affected the stability of the staffing, the current staff are much more positive about the progress the school is making and are now working more as a team with a sense of purpose. Some of the staffing issues have affected curriculum delivery, but recently appointments and advertised roles should allow the school to fulfil its statutory requirements for September 2010. There are now far fewer agency supply staff used in the school because the school is using its own cover supervisors, known to the students, to stand in for absent colleagues. The number of pupils on roll have reduced since the last inspection but remained stable since the November visit.

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



Overall attainment has been below the national averages at GCSE for a number of years and many students have been underachieving relative to their ability, especially the boys. The last monitoring visit identified that Year 11 students' progress had accelerated as a result of some purposeful targeted intervention support. This is still the case. Students see the one-to-one mentoring they receive as supportive. Revised target grades that often follow as a result of mentoring support are proving to be a real boost to their confidence and aspirations. More are now on track to attain or, in a few cases, exceed age-related expectations. The close monitoring and early intervention when Year 11 students fall behind has enabled the school to set, for the first time, ambitious targets above national averages for the 2010 GCSE examinations. The same could not be said of the Year 10 students on the last visit. Since then, whilst the rate of progress for Year 10 is slower than Year 11, their progress is beginning to accelerate due to similar targeted intervention. This targeted supported is now being extended to Key Stage 3, where early indications show that students are on course in English and mathematics to reach higher standards of attainment. The school is now better placed to sustain improvement.

Within the sixth form, there are more positive attitudes from students too who now feel they are receiving good individual support for their learning. Predicted grades for AS and A2 examinations are for an improvement on the 2009 results and nearer to the national average. Secure monitoring and support strategies are enabling students to get the support they need when required. The sixth form is growing in popularity locally and the recent sixth form open evening attracted record numbers interested in applying for a place.

Students report that the quality of teaching has continued to improve since the last visit and that there is more consistency within lessons. They feel they are learning more now, mainly because the learning objectives for the lessons are regularly shared with them. The more regular marking of their work in most lessons is also providing useful suggestions on ways to improve their next piece of work. They particularly enjoy their learning where they feel their ability is well known to the teacher and where they are appropriately challenged as an individual to improve. They enjoy the challenge of practical activities in lessons and being provided with a range of contrasting and interesting tasks, where they do more than just sit and listen to the teacher.

Progress with improving standards since the last visit - satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The behaviour of students remains good overall, as at the last visit. Students and parents expressed fewer concerns than previously about poor behaviour that occurs in a minority of lessons. They report that behaviour expectations are now more consistent across the school, both in and out of lessons, especially now that more staff are following the school's behaviour policy. Inspectors agree. There are still a



few students who disrupt the learning of others in some classes, although teachers are becoming less tolerant of poor behaviour as their expectations of learning outcomes increase.

Attendance in 2009 at 90.5% was well below the national average. However, each monitoring visit has seen an improvement on previous visits. Attendance continues to improve as a result of rigorous monitoring and appropriate in-school action to support poor attendees. Attendance figures so far this term are 92.5%, and quickly rising towards the national average of 92.7%. The rigorous monitoring of poor attendance and improved strategies to support individuals and their families are having a positive impact. The main attendance issue for the school is condoned absence by parents. The education welfare officer (EWO) is only in school for a limited amount of time, and therefore unable to follow up on all the cases needed by the school. Nevertheless, the number of persistent absentees continues to fall. The 77 persistent absentees reported at the last visit has fallen to 59 this term. Students' punctuality has also improved and a previous average of 40 late students a day has reduced to 10. Fixed term exclusions are also down on the same period last year from 50 to 39.

#### The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has improved since the last visit. A large number of lessons were again observed this visit and evidence demonstrates that the extensive support and training provided by the partner school, senior staff and the LA for the whole staff and for individuals is improving the quality and consistency of teaching. Students acknowledge that teaching is now more consistent across the school, especially in areas such as behaviour management and the marking of their work. Twenty eight per cent of lessons were judged good or better on the first visit; 40% on the second monitoring visit and a similar percentage on this visit. The school has focused its attention on supporting the weakest teachers and far fewer inadequate lessons were seen, accounting for 8% of the total number observed. By contrast to previous visits, the majority of lessons displayed positive features such as a greater consistency and more focus on the intended learning for each lesson. This is largely as a result of the close monitoring of lesson planning by heads of department. However, weaker features are still evident in too many lessons. For example, learning objectives in lesson plans that lack measurement, unchallenging questioning that does not probe or sufficiently challenge students, and insufficient use of plenary sessions throughout and at the end of lessons where learning can be checked and reviewed. Improving the quality of teaching and eradicating weak practice remains an ongoing priority for the school.

The last visit asked the school to ensure that planned learning activities in lessons took more account of students' capabilities. There is now growing evidence in more lessons that teachers know each individual's level of attainment and that they take more account of individuals when planning activities. Differentiation features more



prominently in some teachers' lesson plans and groups of students are set different work better suited to their ability in the majority of lessons. The wide range of data now available in the school are used more convincingly, purposefully and consistently to ensure that more students are making progress. All students, especially in Years 10 and 11, have targets and are confident about their current level of work, although some are not quite so sure about what they need to do in some subjects to improve on target grades. English and mathematics are particularly successful subjects in their consistent support for students in all classes to achieve challenging targets. As a consequence, students report that they know they are making better progress in these subjects. The constant revision of targets for the 2010 GCSE exams also confirm that students are making quicker progress. Some subject areas are less successful in ensuring students meet challenging targets because they do not keep students sufficiently informed about the small progress steps they are making, and there is a lack of consistency between departmental staff, for example in science.

Plenary sessions to review learning during and at the end of lessons are more widely used by some staff. However, there is inconsistency in the use of these opportunities throughout lessons in order to review and challenge learning. The management of these sessions still varies widely across the school and some staff are still telling students what they feel they have taught them rather than providing an opportunity to find out through questioning what the students have learned.

The inconsistency of marking identified at the last visit is now better. Students report that they like regular feedback about their progress through the marking of their work. The marking that they find the most useful is that which clearly gives them advice about what they need to do in the next piece of work. The students' 'feedback sheet' is a useful tool, and allows students to reflect on their current and future learning when it is used well. However, inconsistent use is made of this feedback sheet by staff.

Disaffected and vulnerable students are identified and more systematically supported in the Guided Learning Centre. All have individual plans and are on task to do well in a relatively short space of time. Some poorly attending Year 11 students are now attending more regularly and are on course to attain good and appropriate qualifications. Many have improved their attitudes and more have aspirations to stay on in education post-16.

Requirements for the safeguarding of students are robust.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure all teachers maximise the achievement, learning and progress of all pupils in lessons and consequently provide high quality written feedback when assessing pupils' work – satisfactory



- Ensure there is a consistency and coherence in the way assessment information is used throughout the school to set realistic but challenging targets – satisfactory
- Monitor pupils' progress rigorously and systematically and make sure that individual pupils know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work in all subjects – satisfactory

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

The relentless energy and purpose of the acting and executive headteachers has continued to drive the improvement agenda. Good new senior staff appointments have already started to have an impact. The capacity of leaders and managers at all levels has been re-energised by their driving ambition. The post-Ofsted school improvement plan, with key priorities focused on one term at a time, has had a tangible impact on pulling staff together and empowering middle leaders. The plan is a living document and all staff can appreciate the role they have to play in improving the school and raising standards. The plan has been shared with all staff and now class teachers as well as middle and senior managers all share the same vision and work to the same agenda. Staff morale is much better now. Teachers are working hard and the growing sense of consistency in many areas has been noted and appreciated by students and their parents.

Self-evaluation has become a lot more robust and there is much more clarity about what the school needs to do to ensure its recovery and how the LA can provide support. The impact of external support is now evaluated after each visit and this is helping the school to decide about the nature of future support required. However, there is still not enough evaluation of the impact of the LA actions on improving student outcomes. Most of the middle managers, in particular, are responding to the challenge of the systematic and regular monitoring and support for their department as outlined in the action plan for the term, and this is improving their capacity as managers and their effectiveness as leaders. However, there is still too much variability. The honest and regular evaluation of the impact of the plan is ensuring that the subsequent term's plan is even more focused. For example, the school realises that the use of questioning and plenary sessions in lessons to check students' understanding to inform learning in the next lesson is still too inconsistent across the school and requires a sharper, more detailed focus in next term's plan.

Mathematics and computing, the specialist school subjects are still not having enough impact on raising whole-school attainment. This is due in part to the weak management of the programme in the past and the change in emphasis of the post-Ofsted action plan which has become a more potent driver for school improvement. As at the last visit, there remains insufficient focus on the specialist subjects as a driver for whole-school improvement. There is a need for the programme to be re-energised as the school develops confidence.



Leaders and managers at all levels now collectively have a growing capacity to improve the school when the acting and executive headteacher return at the appropriate time to the partner school. The recent appointment of a substantive headteacher and two deputy headteachers places the school in a stronger position to raise standards and maintain the momentum of change. This notwithstanding, too many lessons are being taught by cover staff.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Increase the rigour and accuracy of self-evaluation and improvement planning at all levels of leadership - satisfactory

### External support

The acting headteacher and executive headteacher from the partner school continue to provide outstanding support to the school and have been successful in appointing key staff to enable the school to raise attainment and sustain improvement. The new staff and current staff need time to gel as a cohesive group, especially when the new headteacher takes up post after Easter 2010. The handover period will be crucial to ensure that the momentum of improvement is not lost. There has been good curriculum support from the LA since the last visit. Now that the single collaborative action plan has been used for a term, all parties can appreciate the positive impact the plan is having to drive improvement. As a result, the external support is very focused and targeted. All are aware of the role they have to play to help the school meet its various priorities for each term. Monitoring visits by the LA and by the School Improvement Partner have been valued and have provided leaders and managers with appropriate curriculum support. Leaders and managers at all levels are now in a stronger position to request the support they need rather than just accepting it. Other LA support, for example in dealing with difficult staffing issues, has been less effective.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the learning challenge for students in lessons by:
  - developing a questioning strategy to be used by all staff
  - ensuring that all students know they have made learning gains in every lesson through developing more opportunities to review ongoing learning.
- Increase the proportion of good lessons by further developing the effectiveness of middle leaders through their monitoring and evaluation of questioning and the use of plenary sessions in lessons.





- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels can recognise, share and model good practice in teaching and learning.