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Mrs A Schofield
Buglawton Hall School
Buxton Road
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Cheshire
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Dear Mrs Schofield

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Buglawton Hall School

Following my visit with Michelle Moss, Social Care Inspector, and Helen Clay HMI to your school on 16 and 17 March, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 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 not 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Broomhead
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Buglawton Hall School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including eight lessons or parts of lessons and aspects of the residential provision. They also met with pupils, staff and senior managers, the Executive Principal of the Federation, the Senior School Effectiveness Officer and spoke on the telephone with the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and with the ex-chair of this board.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in November 2009, a number of temporary posts have been made permanent, including the head of centre, a teacher and teaching assistants. The deputy headteacher remains in an acting role because the permanent post has not yet been advertised. The head of care post also remains temporary. There are 26 pupils on roll, of whom 18 are boarders and eight are day pupils who attend off-site provision in Manchester.

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

Standards are improving gradually, although remain variable for individuals, particularly where attendance is poor. At Year 9 standards in mathematics are in line with national averages but some pupils' standards in English are below average. At Year 11 standards in both English and mathematics are below average. The school is tracking progress more closely and identifying underachievement at an earlier stage. Progress in mathematics, science and art has been good, but in English it has been too slow, mainly because learning has been disrupted due to staff shortages in this subject. The newly appointed English teacher is taking swift action to enable Year 11 to achieve accreditation in English and is entering them for the adult literacy qualification this summer. Two of the Year 11 pupils successfully passed GCSE art in Year 10 and are aiming for higher grades this summer. Those pupils who are educated off-site in Manchester are studying a range of vocational modules and some have significantly improved their attendance and already successfully completed units towards level 1 qualifications.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve achievement in English and mathematics – satisfactory.



Other relevant pupil outcomes

The pupils are usually polite, calm, and courteous. They want to learn and willingly accept advice and guidance from staff. The pupils say they feel safe in school. They are learning to manage their anger and frustration more positively. They commented that there is only an occasional need for physical intervention by staff and only until pupils are calm enough to return to lessons. Pupils adopt a generally sensible approach to health and safety, for example when using equipment in the science room.

The school council is taken seriously. Its members have influenced changes, such as establishing different bed times for different age groups. They make their views known in a mature and constructive manner. There are increased opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures, for example through the religious education programme and through arts and cookery. Pupils are also more involved in their local communities. They attend local clubs and this helps them to develop or maintain local friendships.

Attendance is improving; it is over 80% for nearly all boarders and just under half have attendance of over 90%. Good work has been undertaken to reduce persistent absence, with significant success for some individuals.

In recognition of the importance of preparing pupils for the world of work and a return to their local communities, the school has rightly reintroduced work experience and three Year 11 pupils participate in placements one day per week. There is a strong commitment to developing this aspect of the curriculum further.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that opportunities are provided for pupils to understand and appreciate the values and cultures of the school's diverse population – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

Team teaching is becoming increasingly common, with teachers and teaching assistants having a better and shared understanding of lesson objectives and the expected learning outcomes for individuals. Students are taught in small groups and benefit from high staffing ratios. There is a greater emphasis on helping pupils to know what they need to do to reach higher levels. Pupils are given clear guidance and regular feedback which helps to boost their self-esteem. This is having a positive impact on learning and behaviour. In the better lessons staff have established an excellent rapport with pupils and carefully organise the classroom and resources to minimise opportunities for disruption. They make very good use of visual and practical resources to engage pupils' interest, maintain a good pace and help



consolidate their learning. Subject expertise is used extremely well to challenge pupils in their thinking and understanding.

Drawing on expertise from another special school, teachers are developing their systems for collating, analysing and evaluating data on pupils' attainment and progress. A suitable action plan has been drawn up which offers a realistic timescale for achieving the desired improvements.

Improvements have been made to the curriculum since the last monitoring visit. Provision for religious education and personal, social and health education has now been included in the timetable, supported by training for staff and planning guidance. Provision for modern foreign languages has been extended. A greater focus on work-related learning is being reintroduced, beginning with work experience for pupils in Year 11. Outdoor activities and physical education remain strengths in the curriculum and a short course at GCSE level has been introduced this year. Pupils continue to benefit from specialist subject expertise in mathematics, science, information and communication technology and art. The recent appointment of a permanent English teacher adds to this range of expertise.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning – satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support and boarding provision

There is ample evidence of good progress being made in the residential provision. The head of centre and head of care have worked hard to create a school where staff are increasingly ambitious to improve and promote the welfare of pupils. Where improvements have been made, they are making a real difference in the lives of pupils. Pupils are seen as individuals and treated with dignity and respect at all times. The rapport between care staff and pupils is mutually respectful.

All residential pupils now have placement plans that are starting to identify their care and educational needs. Involvement of pupils is starting to emerge and is enabling them to make informed choices and comment on their care. The plan's format aids care staff to map achievements and identify changes needed. This increased intelligence is starting to provide pupils, families and professionals with greater insight into planning future learning and care.

Pupils are now able to access advocacy support and staff are excellent at ensuring that pupils are aware of their rights to seek support from independent services. This extends to improvements in pupils' access to telephones and the internet. These changes have had a positive impact on pupils being able to exercise their rights. Equality of opportunity is also improving, with pupils' cultural heritage starting to be better recognised and incorporated into the quality of care. Pupils are being



encouraged to be healthy and to undertake active lifestyles while attending the school. This includes having various activities available each evening. Aspects of the curriculum are crossing over into care. This extends to personal, health and social education, and citizenship. This has meant pupils are able to receive good advice on matters such as health and relationships outside the classroom and develop life skills necessary for preparation towards adulthood. For example, some excellent work has been completed in offering guidance and support through key working sessions. Work experience is facilitated with specific involvement coming from care staff.

There are stronger links emerging with local health services that are enhancing the health of pupils. Clear procedures are followed for the care staff on the safe storage and administration of medication, which ensures that pupils receive their medication as prescribed by their doctors.

Pupils feel safe at the school and are very supportive of each other. There are effective anti-bullying and complaints policies and procedures in place that enhance the welfare of pupils. Clear procedures on the management of behaviour are developing and records are better at showing that the level of physical intervention used at the school is reducing. Pupils have better access to information on how to raise complaints and are confident in their relationship with staff to raise concerns, knowing that action will be taken. There is a more comprehensive system in place to monitor, record and prevent risks to health and safety at the school. For example, regular fire drills are held at different times to ensure that pupils and staff remain familiar with safe evacuation procedures. The premises and grounds are equally subjected to inspection, although risk assessments still require further development.

The school provides adequate residential facilities for those pupils who choose to stay. However, the furniture provided in pupils' bedrooms does not provide adequate storage for all their clothing and belongings, particularly when they stay more than just a couple of nights per week.

Staffing levels are increasing and better meet the individual needs of pupils. More attention is being paid to recruitment of workers to safeguard children. Nevertheless, the vetting process still has minor shortfalls that hinder the school securing a rigorous approach to safer recruitment. Care staff are gradually receiving training and development opportunities to help equip them with the skills necessary to meet the needs of pupils. However, this is not comprehensive and gaps in learning remain, including in first aid, anti-bullying and food hygiene.

Senior managers are showing a stronger understanding of how the care provision needs to develop further. This extends to providing a good level of support and challenge to drive forward further improvement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:



- Improve the care provided to ensure the health, safety and well-being of pupils and staff, and ensure that the school meets all the boarding national minimum standards which were unmet at the time of the inspection in October 2008 – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The head of centre and her senior leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to raising standards and improving provision in both care and education; this is shared by staff across the school. Staff have been very receptive to external support and are increasingly taking responsibility for aspects of the school's work. Senior managers have acted swiftly to tackle weaknesses. For example, a thorough analysis of attendance patterns revealed underlying causes of persistent absence and individual programmes were put in place which re-engaged some pupils in learning. Significant improvements have been made in tackling previous failings against the national minimum standards for residential special schools. Staff are growing in confidence and expertise in their roles. There has been a significant reduction in the number of physical restraints and a generally calm atmosphere is evident around the school. With support from external partners, senior managers are improving their skills in analysing data, conducting self-evaluation and drawing up action plans to guide their future development. However, the connections between activities being undertaken and resulting improvements to the school's key priorities are not always made clear.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Secure the leadership and management of the school – satisfactory.

External support

The school continues to receive good support from external partners, including the local authority, and through Greater Manchester Challenge. This has taken the form of external auditing and evaluation of education and care, coaching for the head of centre, training for all staff, providing examples of good practice and working alongside staff to develop and improve different aspects of provision. Since the last visit the local authority has drawn together an integrated support plan which outlines briefly the support and resources being offered by different external partners. The impact of this integrated support is due to be evaluated in April.