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Mrs A Schofield
Principal
Buglawton Hall School
Buxton Road
Congleton
Cheshire
CW12 3PQ

Dear Mrs Schofield

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Buglawton Hall School

Following my visit with Michelle Moss, social care inspector to your school on 15 and 16 June, 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 fifth 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 fifth monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 June 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including seven 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, the chair of the interim executive board and the ex-chair of this board. They also met briefly with the two new senior leaders who are due to start in the autumn.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in March 2010, a higher level teaching assistant has been appointed and the teaching assistant posts have been made permanent. Three care staff have also taken up post. Two permanent appointments have been made to the senior leadership team; the head of care will commence in August and the deputy headteacher will take up post on 1 September. Two permanent teachers are absent and lessons in English, and information and communication technology are being covered by supply staff or teaching assistants. There are 27 pupils on roll, of whom 20 are boarders and 7 are day pupils who attend off-site provision in Manchester.

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

In English, standards remain well below average and progress for many pupils has stalled, due mainly to disruption to teaching and learning caused by staff changes and absences. Standards in mathematics have risen steadily and a significant proportion of pupils have made good progress in their learning and exceeded national expectations, particularly in Year 9. The pupils particularly enjoy their mathematics lessons. Standards and progress in science are also improving, with some pupils progressing at a much better rate and getting closer to national expectations. The school continues to enter pupils for a broad range of qualifications at Key Stage 4 including at Entry Level, GCSE, and Adult Literacy and Numeracy. The majority of the current Year 11 pupils are expected to achieve four GCSE equivalent passes at A* to G, which is an improvement on the previous year. Some pupils have successfully achieved Entry Level or GCSE qualifications in Years 9 and 10, reflecting the school's high expectations and the steps it is taking to raise pupils' aspirations.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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



Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils generally behave in a courteous manner and are keen to learn in lessons. They are positive about the school and talked with inspectors about the good teaching and good care that they receive. They trust the staff and say that they feel safe. However, there are pockets of tension between some pupils which are having a negative impact in some lessons.

There continue to be improvements to attendance, compared with previous years. Attendance in Year 9 is very good, with four out of the five pupils achieving 100%. The very positive impact this is having on their progress in learning is notable. However, the school recognises that its average attendance of 77% is still too low and remains a priority for improvement. The school's target is 85.68%.

The focus on vocational education has continued. Year 11 pupils have taken part in work experience placements and were encouraged and supported to link these to their interests, for example in working with animals. This has led to some pupils having a clearer idea of what they would like to do when they leave and being offered places, for example at colleges.

The school has made good progress in opening up opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures and values. These include cultural evenings and cultural weeks, which the pupils speak about with enthusiasm. In lessons, such as art, humanities and religious education, they learn about how people live in different parts of the world and some of the struggles they face each day.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

The effectiveness of provision

The impact of senior leaders' decision to establish a permanent team of teaching assistants is really paying dividends. Strong teams are emerging with a positive impact on teaching and learning. The good practice seen on previous inspection visits has continued and teachers are actively seeking to incorporate what they are learning from the outstanding teachers programme into their lessons. However, staff absences are having a negative impact on continuity in pupils' learning, particularly in English. Teachers now have a better understanding of pupils' attainment and are becoming more skilled at using this information when planning expected learning outcomes for individuals in lessons. Staff have embraced external advice and support and are gaining in confidence in how to adapt this to the school's particular



circumstances. They are establishing internal assessment and moderation systems which are giving them more confidence in the accuracy and reliability of their judgements about pupils' attainment and progress. Guidance and support for learning continue to be strengths and are very positive factors in promoting good attitudes to school.

The personal and social development aspect of the curriculum is now becoming well established. Linked to this, pupils have the opportunity to achieve accreditation at Level 1 through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Certificate of Personal Effectiveness. There have been improvements in integrating the curriculum across the education and residential provision, and positive steps are being taken to provide joint training for staff. The new termly journal for pupils has been carefully designed and supports this work. It includes helpful information and reminders for pupils as well as literacy tasks which can be completed as homework.

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 are areas of care that are increasingly improving outcomes for pupils. These centre strongly around the trust pupils have built up with their carers who give them confidence to succeed, acquire new knowledge and feel safe. Nevertheless, despite these positive aspects, there is a decrease in the level of improvement since the last visit. This has resulted in re-emerging shortfalls that are hindering progress being made to meet all national minimum standards. For example, there has been only marginal improvement in securing training for staff. This has meant pupils continue to be supported by staff who may have gaps in their knowledge of first aid, food hygiene, managing complaints, countering bullying and child protection.

Pupils are now having their needs assessed more effectively and captured within a placement plan. Their participation in this process ensures they are empowered in making decisions that directly affect them. However, placement plans are not holding all the correct information or kept under review, for example in relation to changes to pupils' circumstances.

Admissions to the residential provision are planned effectively and meet the specific needs of individual pupils. Pupils' health needs are increasingly being met by stronger links emerging with various health-related agencies. Pupils have excellent opportunities to enhance their physical well-being through a comprehensive array of activities both within the school and through community links. However, the content of health plans is sketchy and therefore limits key health information being formally known. There are some good arrangements for recording, storing and monitoring



medication. However, some elements of managing medications are less robust. For example, the school is not evidencing they have assessed a pupil's competency to self administer their own medication before being given this responsibility

Pupils are encouraged and supported to develop life skills that prepare them for adulthood. Also, their views and opinions are increasingly sought and these are helping to reshape the school's future. Effective links with pupils' families are secure, with families being provided with clear and regular information about the school, the residential unit and their child's progress.

Staffing levels have been increased by appointing a number of new staff to the care team. However, there remain shortfalls in areas of recruitment to ensure all the required suitability checks are completed to safeguard pupils. Also, new staff are not provided with a structured induction or access to frequent supervision. This limits them gaining key information and receiving support whilst new to their roles and responsibilities. More positively, all shifts start with handovers, care staff have access to regular meetings to discuss pupils' welfare, and staff confirmed good communication exists throughout the school which enhances pupils' learning and care. Personal development plans are now being used which enable staff to contribute to planning and their future development, but there is no annual appraisal process in place in which their performance can be assessed.

The care staff are sensitive to the promotion of pupils' privacy and address without delay any anti-social behaviour, including tackling bullying. Complaints procedures are understood by pupils and they have exercised their rights to complain. However, they are less confident in the overall effectiveness of the school taking their concerns seriously. Added to this, records of physical interventions do not always provide a clear and concise account of how staff are applying the different categories of restraint, including direct holds. Despite this shortfall there is an increased emphasis placed on debriefing pupils following restraints and as a consequence, pupils' opinions and feelings are more formally known.

The school conforms to requirements in most areas of health and safety including fire and electrical safety. However, the monitoring of hot water temperature is not rigorous enough. This means the risks associated with scalding are not adequately managed. The school does not offer waking night staff an annual health assessment so is not meeting all the requirements of the Working Time Directive.

The promotion of equality and diversity has become a more integral part of care and support. Pupils having increased opportunities to develop their social networks and participate in multi-cultural activities that help prepare them for life in a diverse society. A proactive approach is taken to limit potential discrimination that can emerge through isolation of placement. This includes pupils being given the opportunity to sustain strong links with their own communities through attending clubs and accessing facilities that can continue to be resourced during both term



time and holidays.

Pupils are increasingly settled in their upgraded residential accommodation and have formed a strong sense of trust with care staff which is based on mutual respect, courtesy and honesty. The pupils are offered a variety of meals that reflect diverse food preferences and they particularly enjoy cooking meals for themselves. Pupils comment that there could be some slight improvements to the meals and the quality of toiletries supplied.

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 the school meets all the boarding national minimum standards which were unmet at the time of the inspection in October 2008 – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher is becoming well established and her clear vision for the school can be seen in emerging good practice. She has encouraged and enabled a collaborative approach to school improvement. Staff at all levels share her vision and have embraced the many opportunities they have had to draw on good practice from elsewhere. They are becoming more skilled at evaluating the quality of provision and identifying priorities for improvement. Recent appointments have been made to bring permanency to staffing at all levels. The school is doing its best to address teacher shortages and to try to minimise the impact on pupils' learning.

Senior leaders have continued to promote a positive ethos within care and permanent appointments have been made to increase staffing levels. However, there is insufficient internal knowledge, understanding and expertise in relation to the requirements to meet national minimum standards for residential special schools. In addition, there has been a reduction in the external monitoring of the quality of the care and the last standard 33 visit took place back in January 2010. As a result, progress in meeting minimum standards has slowed.

The interim executive board is moving ahead with plans to establish a governing body for the school and governor appointments are well underway. This is taking place within a wider restructuring of the Federation, which the school will remain an integral part of, and its proposals to establish a trust. The school's final staffing structure has yet to be finalised.

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. The local authority has updated its statement of action and this indicates more clearly the effectiveness of its interventions over time. Since the last inspection there has been a more coordinated approach to how this support and guidance is provided for and received by the school, with the headteacher taking a more proactive role in determining how the school can most effectively take on board and adapt this to suit the school's needs. For example, the school has worked closely with a local outstanding special school to improve its approach to assessing and tracking pupils' progress. It has linked this to the guidance it has received from the local authority on improving assessment for learning. However, the external support for the school in improving care has been less effective, mainly because monitoring visits have not been frequent or regular enough to ensure the school is complying with minimum standards.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that all national minimum standards are met fully.
- Improve standards and pupils' progress in English.
- Improve attendance.