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Mrs Vivien Sharples
Acting Headteacher
The Pingle School
Coronation Street
Swadlincote
DE11 0QA

Dear Mrs Sharples

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Pingle School

Following my visit to your school on 12 September 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body, and representatives of the local authority. A range of documentation, including the most recent reports to the governing body and governing body minutes, were scrutinised, along with recent records of safeguarding. The vetting checks on new staff were also examined. Brief visits were made to a sample of classes to look at the impact of actions taken since the previous inspection. Tours were made of corridors at lesson changes and the outside areas at break-time, when informal discussions with a range of students took place. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has resigned. An interim headteacher was appointed, who was previously the deputy headteacher of the school. The leadership team has been restructured and responsibilities re-negotiated. An interim

executive board was appointed in September 2013 to replace the governing body. A significant number of staff left the school at the end of August 2013 and have now been replaced. The appointment of a permanent headteacher is expected to be made in the autumn term 2013.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The school's senior leaders have responded positively to the inspection report. The acting headteacher has had a positive impact since her appointment and improvements in many aspects of school life are apparent. The acting headteacher and senior leaders, including governors and the local authority, are very ambitious for the school. There is a clear sense of direction and a strong commitment to improvement. Staff are unified and are now working hard together to make the improvements that are needed. A strong link has been forged with a good school in the area which has recently undergone rapid improvement. This is proving to be effective in showing staff what is possible and that high expectations can pay off.

A culture of openness has helped senior leaders to identify quickly what needs improving and an action plan was assembled. This is complemented by a support plan from the local authority. These address the weaknesses identified by the previous inspection, and indicate when monitoring will take place and by whom.

Both the local authority's plan and the school's improvement plan require amendment. The timescale for the removal of special measures is not realistic. The spread of activities is such that too many developments happen in the first term. The impact of some of the actions is not sufficiently measurable to support effective monitoring. Some actions lack the short-term targets necessary to enable leaders to check precisely how much progress is being made. There are not sufficient targets for the performance of students in Years 10 and 11 included in the plans. The local authority's support plan does not mesh with the school's action plan and timescales are not aligned. Furthermore, the support plan does not make it explicit how governors will monitor and evaluate the quality of external support that the school is receiving. The acting headteacher and the local authority recognise these drawbacks and have plans to rectify them.

The local authority adviser knows the school well and is working effectively with senior and middle leaders in both quality-assuring the work of the school and guiding its actions. Swift and effective action has been taken to replace the outgoing headteacher and to strengthen governance.

Governance at the school has been transformed by the formation of an interim executive board. Governors are now clearly focused on the quality of education received by the school's students. They are committed to helping the school to make

rapid progress by overseeing improvements in achievement, teaching and learning, behaviour and attendance, and leadership and governance.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint a maximum of two newly qualified teachers, restricted to the mathematics department. These appointments can only be made if appropriate mentoring and strong professional support can be assured.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire and The Education Funding Agency (EFA). This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector