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14 February 2014

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

Dear Ms Sharples

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Pingle School**

Following my visit with Robert Ridout and Robert Steed, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 12–13 February 2014, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan are now fit for purpose following the amendments made after the first monitoring visit.

The school may appoint a maximum of three newly qualified teachers between now and the next monitoring visit. These appointments can only be made if appropriate mentoring and strong professional support can be assured.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, Strategic Director of Children and Younger Adults for Derbyshire and to the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2013**

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the majority is good and none is inadequate, by ensuring that:
  - lessons are properly planned to allow for the differing needs of students
  - techniques that help to deepen students' understanding, such as good questioning and the provision of opportunities for students to discuss and explore complex ideas, become much more widely used
  - much greater focus is placed on checking the progress that students are making
  - all teachers have consistently high expectations of standards of behaviour and the presentation of students' work
  - teachers consistently apply the agreed strategies to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of students
  - teachers mark students' work regularly and provide helpful guidance for improvement, ensuring that students are given the time and support to respond to this advice and learn from it.
  
- Ensure that leaders, managers and governors provide very clear direction, support and accountability, particularly by:
  - including clear markers by which progress can be judged in the school development plan, and building in processes for effective monitoring, so that leaders and governors can properly evaluate success
  - including in the performance management of staff a clear statement of the performance objectives that each person must meet; providing guidance, training and support; and making regular checks to ensure that improvement is taking place
  - using advice from successful schools to enable leaders and managers to put in place effective systems for monitoring the work of the school more quickly
  - making sure that the governing body quickly establishes procedures to ensure that pupil premium funding benefits the students for whom it is intended and that teachers' pay is more closely linked to the quality of their teaching.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 12–13 February 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised documents and incident logs. They met with the acting headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, representatives of the interim executive board (IEB), and a representative from the local authority. Meetings were held with three groups of students. Inspectors also spoke to individual teachers and students. They observed 25 lessons. Around one-quarter of the lesson observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior team.

### **Context**

The staffing of the school has changed considerably since the last monitoring visit. The appointment of the acting headteacher has been confirmed until the end of the academic year. As a result, a number of temporary senior positions have been established to provide cover while this arrangement is in place. Line management responsibilities have been streamlined. New posts have been created to oversee interventions, catch up and the use of pupil premium funding. Around one-quarter of the teaching staff are new to the school this year and around one-sixth of posts are temporary or provide short-term cover for staff absences.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Many students join the school with low levels of attainment. Students have particularly weak literacy skills. This restricts them from making quick progress across a wide range of subjects.

The 2013 GCSE results were well below the national average. Only 43% attained five or more good GCSE passes including English and mathematics. There was a significant gap in the attainment of students supported by the pupil premium funding and other students in the school. Overall achievement remained inadequate because there was not enough time to bring about the necessary improvements between May, when the last inspection took place, and the time students sat their final GCSE examinations in May and June. The school recognises that weaknesses in literacy have prevented many students from achieving their full potential, especially in subjects where extensive writing is required in examinations.

Students in the current Year 11 are expected to achieve better results in 2014. However, the rate of improvement is not yet fast enough to bring attainment up to national levels. Rates of progress across Key Stages 3 and 4 are improving, but are still too low in most subjects, including in English and core science.

In mathematics, there has been some recent improvement in the progress being made by students in their final year. This is confirmed by the school's own data and inspectors' observations.

In lessons, students' attainment and progress vary. In some lessons, students make good progress. In others, students' progress is slow and not sufficient to raise standards to the levels expected for their age. In a few lessons, progress is inadequate. Gaps remain between the attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals and the national average for this group, but these are closing. There is a similar pattern for disabled students and those who have special educational needs.

In the sixth form, results in 2013 showed that Year 13 students made slightly less than expected progress at both A and AS levels in both academic and vocational subjects. In-school data show that results are projected to rise this year to average or above-average levels. These expected improvements are largely due to the rationalisation of the entry policy and a broadening of the curriculum to include more vocational subjects. This means that more students are on appropriate courses where they stand a better chance of success.

The school has set up new systems to track students' progress, identify those who are falling behind their targets, and measure the effect of the additional support they are given. This information gives a clear picture of students' progress across the school and enables staff to spot patterns and trends in performance early. However, not all teachers use this new data effectively and so the full impact on driving up rates of progress in all classes in all subjects is not yet evident.

The school has recently commenced a corrective reading programme for students in Year 7. For the small group of students involved, there has been an improvement. Intervention programmes are offered to a wider group of students, with marginal improvements seen in their reading ages. Teachers are picking up mistakes in spelling and grammar through their marking, and this is leading to improvement.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching continues to improve. The proportion of lessons in which inspectors judged teaching as good has risen. Inspectors saw a small number of lessons where teaching was outstanding, and a very small number in which teaching was judged inadequate.

The school has rightly put more effort and resources into the improvement of teaching. A variety of voluntary and directed staff training is in place, all designed to improve teaching practice and hence learning in lessons. After-school sessions have focused on lesson planning, independent learning, questioning and creating lessons that are more active. Further personalised support is tailored to support those teachers whose individual practice requires further improvement. The school expects

all staff to design lessons so that learning is planned in progressive steps and students are clear about how they can achieve the intended outcomes. This is now being regularly checked by heads of department or senior leaders. Staff training has been delivered on the new assessment policy including re-setting targets and outlining how to track and evaluate students' progress. Most, but not all teachers are better aware of how to use assessment information to plan lessons at the right pitch or level of difficulty. Newly qualified teachers have strong support programmes in place which ensure that they meet or exceed the teachers' standards that are required of them.

In class, more students work conscientiously and with a strong desire to succeed. This is because lessons challenge and interest them. Teachers have higher expectations of what students can do and what they are capable of doing. In these lessons, students apply their knowledge well to answer questions and tackle problems. However, where the levels of the lesson content or demands are too low, students become bored and restless, and learning suffers.

Assessment has improved. Teachers generally evaluate attainment accurately, and have reliable data to show how students are progressing. In the best examples, this information is used to pitch lessons at a level that challenges all, but in others, it is not used well enough.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students spoken to were keen to point out that behaviour in classes and around the school is improving. This is due to the introduction of a revised behaviour policy. Rewards and sanctions are now clearly understood. However, students say that behaviour is not yet perfect and low-level disruptions still occur in some lessons, usually where the teaching is dull or undemanding. Inspectors agree. Students know what the expectations of behaviour are, and they are aware that these have been raised since the last inspection. Most students welcome this move and respond well to the added responsibility that they bear. 'We are supposed to earn our keep now'; 'for the most part this is a good environment to work in' are typical comments that support the view that times are changing.

With the increase in expectations of behaviour has come an associated increase in the rates of exclusions, in-class removals and behaviour points in the autumn term. There are signs that the use of these sanctions is now declining as the new behaviour system beds in. Through its tracking, the school has identified a number of students who are responsible for the majority of the incidents of poor behaviour in the school. These students receive tailored out-of-class support which prepares them for reintegration.

Students new to the school have settled in quickly. They know that bullying can and does happen, and when it occurs, they know who to turn to for support. Students say that they feel safe at the school.

Attendance is showing an improving trend. It is now above the national average.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The acting headteacher shows focused leadership. Her ambition and determination for the school to be better quickly is widely shared across the staff and the IEB. The school is moving forward and the rate of improvement is increasing. Recent changes to the management structure are designed to focus on making the improvements that are needed. Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's weaknesses and strengths and an effective plan is now in place to address these weaknesses. Links have been established with good local schools. The sharing of best practice between institutions is now the norm.

The restructuring of the senior team is complete, but this is only temporary. A permanent headteacher is yet to be appointed. Only when this is done can the school move forward with certainty and confidence using the new systems, policies and practices that are now in place to make a strong and lasting impact.

Middle leaders have a greater responsibility for the teaching and learning in their departments, and are accountable for the success of their students. They make valiant attempts to improve the achievement of students in the current Year 11 through the new initiatives. However, they are hampered by the high number of temporary or supply staff in their departments, which makes it difficult to secure the improvements that are needed in the lower year groups. There are plans to address this, but the school does not expect to be fully staffed until September 2014.

The meeting of school targets are reinforced through teachers' own appraisal targets. These relate to teaching quality and to the progress of students in one or more of their classes.

The IEB was established in September 2013. Therefore, the external review of governance that was recommended at the last inspection is no longer deemed necessary. The IEB maintains a close eye on day-to-day matters and focuses on addressing the priority areas outlined in the school action plan. Members of the IEB know the strengths and development needs of the school, including how quickly the quality of teaching is improving and what still needs to be done to increase students' achievement further. They carefully analyse outcomes, including examination and test results, and the impact of pupil premium spending. They support and challenge the school to do better.

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the local authority has taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose. The school action plan has also been amended. An executive summary clearly outlines the key improvement actions and milestones for success. The senior leadership team reviews the actions and their impact regularly and present this to the IEB for scrutiny.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided increased support since the last monitoring visit. In addition to specialist advice and guidance in English, mathematics and science, help and training have been provided to support improvements in teaching and in behaviour management. Senior and middle leaders have also received training in how to assure the quality of their work and make accurate evaluations. Regular reviews check on the school's progress, accurately evaluate the quality of all aspects of provision and provide useful pointers for further development.