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Claire Evans  
Headteacher  
Wednesfield High School, A Specialist Engineering College  
Lichfield Road  
Wednesfield  
Wolverhampton  
WV11 3ES

Dear Miss Evans

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Wednesfield High School, A Specialist Engineering College**

Following my visit to your school on 12 March 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 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 on 11 December 2013.

#### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with you and other members of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's post-Ofsted action plans were evaluated.

#### **Context**

Since the inspection, one of your deputy headteachers has been on maternity leave. In the absence of this key member of staff, you have provided a temporary secondment to the senior leadership team for a subject leader whom you consider to be talented. You have also changed the roles and responsibilities of other members

of your senior team. This has provided extra capacity to focus on key areas identified as weaknesses in the inspection.

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

It was clear from my discussions with you, the local authority's representative and the Chair of the Governing Body that there is a strong ambition to move the school forward and to be removed from special measures as soon as possible. No time has been wasted, and your response to the inspection outcomes was immediate. You are aware of the barriers that need to be overcome, not least of which is the challenge currently facing the school to recruit a high-quality leader of mathematics and also to recruit experienced teachers of mathematics to fill the posts that become vacant in the department from September.

Your plan of action is detailed, with objectives which cover all the areas identified as needing improvement. These objectives link to clear actions required, targets that must be met and identifiable steps that will be achieved along the way. The targets set for progress in English and mathematics for 2014 are ambitious, namely for at least three-quarters of students to make the progress that is expected of them in both subjects and at least two-fifths of students to make good progress. Your plan of action would benefit from further refinement to identify clearly who is responsible for checking that key actions are carried out, what information is needed to demonstrate this and a precise date when checking will take place. This will support governors in holding people to account for the progress of the plan.

The local authority's statement of action outlines appropriate strategies that will support the school in being removed from special measures. Rather than seeking support from one particular partner school, the local authority has been successful in brokering support from a number of good and outstanding schools which have been identified as having clear strengths in the areas needed; for example, in the use of assessment information throughout the school, including in the sixth form. The services of an external consultant have been agreed to support the improvements required in mathematics, such as in the accuracy of teachers' assessments. Initial contacts with all partners have been established and work is already underway in all areas.

You and your senior team are committed to improving the quality of teaching and know this is the key to making sure that students make better progress, especially in mathematics. You have planned a series of training sessions for teachers which address weaknesses in teaching identified in the previous section 5 inspection. Teachers have already attended training in planning lessons which challenge all students and in developing strategies to encourage students to think more deeply.

Senior leaders say that teachers now have a better idea of how to improve their lessons. Further training is planned, but senior leaders need to check that this training is actually having an impact on improving the quality of teaching. Observations of teaching are too infrequent to allow senior leaders to report accurately on the quality of teaching, or to take swift action where teaching is not yet good enough to ensure that all students make progress. Other plans to make sure that teachers have the opportunity to observe each other's practice are being developed.

Through the support you have received from one of your partner schools, there is now a much sharper focus on the way assessment information is used by teachers. Teachers have a better understanding of the information they need to provide and subject leaders are clearer about how to use this data. These improvements will allow teachers to identify individual students requiring support. Leaders at all levels will also have access to reliable information on the achievements of particular groups of students, such as those who receive support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals).

You currently have a vacancy for a subject leader of mathematics and have moved your head of technology to lead the mathematics department as an interim measure. Due to this leader's experience in improving another department in the school, this step is proving effective and is providing an appropriate level of challenge for teachers of mathematics. However, it is not sustainable as a long-term arrangement, and governors need to urgently recruit to this post.

The recommended external review of governance has taken place. This was carried out through the National College for Teaching and Leadership. Governors are now taking decisive action to address concerns identified in the report they have received. Training for governors is planned on using assessment information and also in linking teachers' pay to their performance. A restructuring of the governing body's committees has already taken place and, within the new structure, there is now a school improvement group which will focus specifically on the progress of actions to remove special measures.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's post-Ofsted action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Wolverhampton City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones

**Her Majesty's Inspector**