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12 December 2014

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

Dear Mrs Sharples

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

Following my visit with Richard White and Timothy McGuire, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 9–10 December 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 fourth 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 which were 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 school may appoint an additional two newly qualified teachers, in any subject, before the next monitoring inspection.

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 Interim Executive Board, the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Julia Wright  
**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 fourth monitoring inspection on 9-10 December 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised documents including the school improvement plan, the self-evaluation form, and samples of students' books in English, mathematics and science. They met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the head of post 16, five subject leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector held a meeting by telephone with the English consultant for the local authority. An inspector also telephoned the manager of Newhall Support Centre, which provides education for students who are at risk of permanent exclusion in South Derbyshire. Inspectors held meetings with two groups of students. Inspectors also analysed 102 responses to the Ofsted staff survey. They observed 17 parts of lessons, seven of which were carried out jointly with members of the senior team. Inspectors considered the progress being made in addressing the key recommendations that were identified in the previous inspection report, with the exception of that relating to the review of governance, as this was deemed no longer necessary at a previous monitoring inspection.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, staffing in the mathematics department has been strengthened. This includes the appointment of two new assistant headteachers, and one full- and one part-time teacher of mathematics. Two newly-qualified teachers have commenced work in the physical education and modern foreign languages departments. Two temporary assistant headteachers and a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) have been appointed internally. Four new governors have been appointed to the IEB.

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

GCSE results in 2014 showed some improvements in a number of key areas. The proportion of Year 11 students gaining 5A\*-C grades, including English and mathematics, increased five percentage points to 48%, but this was below the school's predictions. In 2014, at the end of Year 11, those students known to be eligible for the pupil premium were approximately a grade behind their peers in both English and mathematics; this is an improvement compared to 2013. The difference in progress that these students make, compared to others in the school, continued to widen in English in 2014, although it narrowed in mathematics. The school has a number of students with a wide range of additional learning needs, who are supported in specialist learning areas including the autism resource centre (ARC) and the learning support base (LSB). Overall, there are improvements to the achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs. However, those students identified as being at school action plus, achieved less well

than they should. The most-able students made progress in line with national expectations in both subjects, but students of other abilities under-achieved.

Data provided by the school show that Year 11 students are likely to achieve better results in English and mathematics in 2015. Rates of progress at Key Stage 3 are also improving at a faster rate than last year. However, these data require further moderation to confirm their accuracy and sustainability. Leaders have introduced appropriate internal and external systems to ensure the consistency of assessment between teachers in all subjects, but these are not fully embedded. Students still have some large gaps in their knowledge, particularly in mathematics, as a result of inadequate teaching over time. School leaders have measures in place to address this, including Saturday morning classes and lunchtime revision sessions. They recognise that this issue has been due to a previous lack of stability in staffing in mathematics, where students have been taught by a number of temporary teachers. In 2014, there were some improvements in students' achievement at AS level, and outcomes have remained similar to 2013 for A2 level. The improvements at AS level were a result of the post-16 leader introducing more effective information and guidance systems and rigorous entry requirements to courses. The post-16 study programme is in place, offering a variety of academic and vocational courses at level 3 and opportunities for wider learning. Those students who re-take GCSEs in English and mathematics are successful. All post-16 students progress to appropriate further education and training.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching continues to improve at a rapid pace. The learning culture is palpable and teachers recognise the improvements they have made in their practice. Teachers have access to a wealth of data about their students which they use to plan their lessons meticulously. Despite this, teaching is still occasionally pitched only to the middle-ability students. As a result, some students, of differing abilities, make slower progress than they should.

Teachers' use of questioning remains inconsistent. On occasion, teachers' questioning results in some students dominating class discussions. Where questioning is most effective, for example, in a history lesson, the teacher's targeted and open-ended questioning helped students develop their curiosity and confidence, thus deepening their understanding of complex issues and accelerating their learning. Students have a clear understanding about their levels and grades. Teachers frequently use mini whiteboards to enable them to check students' understanding and progress. However, some teachers do not use them effectively to help them determine what students' next steps in learning should be.

Students' behaviour in lessons continues to improve. This is due to more staff having consistently high expectations for students' behaviour. A very small minority of low-level disruption was observed in Key Stage 3 lessons. School leaders have rightly

focused on improving attitudes to learning in Year 8. The presentation of students' work is improving, but some inconsistencies remain. Since September, the school's expectations for presentation are noted in the front of every exercise book, and teachers take opportunities to reinforce these.

Since September, leaders have placed an increased emphasis on literacy. The school is increasingly becoming a language-rich environment; key words are noted in teachers' planning and frequently referred to in lessons; 'word walls' are in every classroom; and students' literacy development is a focus of lesson observations by senior staff. As a result, students use an increasing number of specialist words within their vocabulary. Students' numeracy skills are less well-developed, although plans are in place to address this.

The quality of marking continues to improve. Teachers regularly correct work and offer advice for improvement. Students report that they are given time to respond to marking and appreciate this. However, some inconsistencies remain in marking; there is less written feedback in mathematics books than in other subject areas; the quality of advice for improvement given by teachers is variable.

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

Students report that both conduct and attitudes to learning in lessons have improved and school monitoring data support this. Fixed-term exclusions have declined by a third compared to the same time period last year. Leaders have appropriately identified some students who have persistent behavioural difficulties, and they have put effective strategies in place to support them and overcome their barriers to learning. Students say that bullying of all types is rare and that The Pingle is an inclusive school. The Manager of the Newhall Support Centre confirmed that The Pingle students attend regularly and access appropriate 'pathways' to learning.

Attendance has declined slightly, this term, and is just below the national average. In particular, the attendance of disadvantaged students has fallen, and these students are also more likely to be regularly absent. School leaders are aware of this, and the resulting impact upon the achievement of those students eligible for the pupil premium funding. School leaders have recently accessed additional attendance support and plan the introduction of attendance league tables from January.

Safeguarding systems meet requirements. Policies for child protection are fully up-to-date. School leaders make appropriate referrals to the local authority in a timely manner.

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

Staff morale is high and there is a shared ambition for school improvement. Teachers are supportive of the headteacher and her senior team. Subject leaders report that she has played a pivotal role in making rapid improvements to the school. They describe an open culture, where no blame is attached, but honest conversations take place. The headteacher is rigorous and determined in her approach, and is highly skilled in achieving the best from her staff. One member of staff wrote, 'There is excellent management – you can see how well the school has improved over the last 12-18 months.'

The leadership of teaching is a strength of the school and there is a rigorous focus on improving teaching. The quality of teaching is monitored over time through a number of activities, including focused 'learning walks', lesson observations, work scrutiny and checking students' progress. The school's system for performance management is fit for purpose. Teachers' appraisal targets are specific, measurable and personalised. These targets are reviewed at regular intervals and additional reviews are in place for those who are not making sufficient progress towards achieving them. A variety of voluntary and directed staff training is in place, all designed to improve teaching practice and hence learning in lessons. Newly-qualified teachers are also well supported. Data systems have been transformed. The deputy head has made information about students readily available and user-friendly. Most staff now talk about data with confidence and use it to plan their lessons. The teaching and learning handbook is a valuable source of information to exemplify good practice. It provides a focus for Friday staff briefings, where different staff share successful techniques on 'pedagogy postcards'. As a result of the improvements made in teaching, another school has requested leadership support in this area.

The Chair of the IEB ensures that the pupil premium funding is now spent on those students who are entitled to it. The senior leader responsible for this area has established an effective system to identify each individual's precise need and evaluate the impact of any interventions. He ensures that any interventions that are not having an impact are reviewed and not used again, to ensure that money is not wasted.

Subject leaders are growing in confidence; they are more rigorously held to account and recognise the journey that they have been on and the actions that still need to be taken. They are under no illusion about the scale of the issues affecting their departments, caused by a legacy of inadequate teaching.

The IEB was established in September 2013. Its members rigorously monitor the priority areas outlined in the school improvement plan and provide strong challenge to school leaders about progress. They check routinely that the school's actions are making a difference. Each meeting ends with a standing item, 'What have we

achieved tonight to improve outcomes for our children?’ Members of the IEB know the strengths and development needs of the school, including those relating to students’ achievement and the quality of teaching. They ensure that teachers’ performance is linked to pay. A shadow governing body is gradually being introduced to provide sustainable governance in the future. Four additional governors have been recruited, one of whom will have responsibility for monitoring the attendance of students.

### **External support**

The local authority is proactive and the support that they give is highly valued. Consultants have provided recent training in developing the quality of leadership in core subjects and coaching staff in behaviour management techniques. The local authority advisers have also provided assessment support for core faculties, including checking the assessment of controlled assignments in English. They have also provided opportunities for leaders and staff to work with other schools in the locality to learn from good and outstanding practice. The necessity to access support from these schools has reduced over time.