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Jeremy Rowe
Executive Headteacher
Sewell Park College
St Clement's Hill
Norwich
NR3 4BX

Dear Mr Rowe

Special measures monitoring inspection of Sewell Park College

Following my visit to your school on 5 February 2015, 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 October 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, and with members of the interim executive board (IEB) that includes a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement and action plans were evaluated. In addition, several lessons were visited with the headteacher.

Context

The IEB that replaced the governing body prior to the last inspection continues to have oversight of the school. The current headteacher has been seconded from a

secondary school whose overall effectiveness has been judged by Ofsted to be good. He has a strong record of school improvement.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher has quickly given the school a strong and purposeful momentum for improvement. Together with the senior leadership team, he has placed the school in a good position from which it can improve quickly. The mechanisms to do this, which were missing at the last inspection, are now in place.

Action plans are excellent. They are concise, detailed, and cover all of the areas defined by the last inspection as needing improvement. Targets are ambitious but realistic. Progress towards them is monitored often and action taken quickly if progress is not fast enough. Performance management has improved. Senior and middle leaders now have clear job descriptions and targets. Staff are held to account for the performance of their students.

The school is quieter and calm. Improved attendance, noted at the last inspection, has been maintained and remains close to the national average for this type of school. The number of exclusions is now very low, with a declining trend. In part, these changes are due to the school's new behaviour policy. Students are clear about what is expected of them. The rules are now applied with more consistency across different classes.

Operational aspects of school life are now much more consistent than at the time of the last inspection. This is because middle leaders now know what the school's expectations are. They now regularly monitor homework, marking, and the planning of teaching. Lesson observations are undertaken more frequently than in the past and senior leaders have a greater presence visiting classes on a regular basis. All of these actions are helping to drive the improvement of teaching. The school can point to examples of teachers whose practice has improved as a result. However, leaders' systems for observing lessons do not fully exploit opportunities to drive up standards in the school. Instances in which pupils are not taught to a high enough level, or where the most able are not challenged sufficiently, are not always recognised.

Students now work diligently in many classes, responding well to teachers' requests and challenges.

The assessment of students' attainment and progress has improved. It is now systematic and accurate across all year groups. It is regularly checked for accuracy by school staff and by staff from a nearby outstanding school with whom the school has formed a partnership. Data is now analysed effectively. Teachers and leaders

have up-to-date and accurate indications of how students, groups and classes are performing in all subjects. These data indicate early signs of improving standards in the current Year 11. Improvements in progress are also seen in English in Years 8 and 9, and notably for boys.

The interim executive board, established to replace the governing body prior to the last inspection, remains in place. Its members have taken steps to secure the future improvement of the school. It has ensured that the school has had very comprehensive support that has closely matched its needs. Much of this has been arranged by the local authority, which has supported the school well.

The statement of action, produced by the local authority in response to the school being placed in special measures, is very detailed. Actions are appropriate and closely match the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Milestones for improvement are sensible and clear.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

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

The school's improvement and action plans are fit for purpose.

The school may appoint up to three newly qualified teachers. However, they should be mentored by an appropriate external organisation; for example, the nearby high-performing school with which the school is working.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. For the Secretary of State.
cc. Interim Executive Board.
cc. Director of Children's Services.