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11 February 2015

Mark Garside  
Headteacher  
The International School  
Gressel Lane  
Tile Cross  
Birmingham  
B33 9UF

Dear Mr Garside

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

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 November 2014.

#### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and groups of middle leaders and senior leaders. I also met with a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of Wheelers Lane Technology College, who is providing support for the school. I made short visits to a number of lessons and looked in students' books. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

#### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, one assistant headteacher has left the school. A new assistant headteacher has been appointed. A number of governors, including the

Chair of the Governing Body and the joint Vice-Chairs, have resigned and only three governors are currently serving on the governing body.

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

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has restructured the leadership team so that their roles are better focused to deliver school improvement priorities. This has also resulted in clearer structures of line management in order that subject leaders and pastoral leaders can be better supported and held to account. For example, an assistant headteacher leads a 'core group' of subject leaders, comprising the leaders of English, mathematics, science and physical education, so that shared priorities for improving teaching and achievement can be tackled with greater consistency across these teams. Some training has also already been delivered to teachers. It is too early to gauge the impact of these changes.

Whole-school targets for managing the performance of teachers have been rewritten so that expectations of teachers are increased. These targets make it clear that teachers need to ensure that the students they teach make good progress, and that teachers must consistently follow new guidance on marking. Leaders now need to ensure that, when these targets are set for individual teachers, they are precise and support teachers in how to improve their teaching.

During my visit, the local authority and a commissioned external team were undertaking a full review of teaching and learning in the school. This is a sensible strategy. It is intended to provide a robust baseline of the skills and development needs of every teacher in the school. Leaders will then develop a training programme for teachers to address their needs. This will also enable leaders to measure improvements in the quality of teaching. The involvement of the school's senior leaders and subject leaders in this process is providing vital training on how to identify accurately the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, and on how to provide effective feedback to teachers so that they improve.

During a short tour of the school, I saw how some teachers were beginning to follow the new procedures for marking. However, this practice is not consistent, and standards of marking both within and across departments are variable. Considerable variation was also evident in the quality of students' written work. It is also clear that some teachers still do not accurately assess the standards students are working at. Students were generally focused and keen to learn. The majority listened attentively to their teachers, answered questions when asked, and got on with their work. In some lessons, the enthusiasm demonstrated by the teacher helped to engage students.

I was unable to meet with any governors during my visit. The current governing body is significantly depleted following a number of resignations since the previous inspection. The governing body is therefore unable to carry out its statutory duties or hold leaders to account for delivering improvements. Rapid action now needs to be taken by the local authority to ensure that the proposed interim executive board is promptly put in place.

The high proportion of temporary, unqualified, or non-specialist teachers in the school is a serious concern and a considerable barrier to delivering sustained improvements. Some recent appointments have been made, such as a new assistant subject leader in English, but, for the foreseeable future, there remain too few permanent staff in the school.

The local authority's statement of action and school development plan are suitably focused on tackling the range of weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. There are clear actions detailed to strengthen leadership, improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement. Targets for students' achievement do not currently take into account different groups of students. The intended impact of some proposed actions need to be considered more carefully so that success can be evaluated precisely. For example, it is not clear enough how leaders will measure the impact of some actions taken to communicate high expectations of students. The plan should be updated in the light of findings from the current review of teaching in the school.

Local authority officers have commissioned support from another school. The headteacher of Wheeler's Lane Technology College has been instrumental in supporting the plan for improvement and has a good understanding of the scale of the challenges ahead. A considerable strength of the plan is the robust arrangement for quality assurance, so that school leaders arrive at an accurate view of the school's performance through better monitoring processes. The temporary appointment of two additional, experienced leaders should further support the delivery of the improvement plan. Regular meetings of a 'monitoring task force' will allow leaders and the local authority to consider the impact of this work and hold school leaders to account for making improvements happen.

There is little information in the school improvement plan on what specific actions will be taken next academic year. Proposals within the local authority's statement of action for the school to become an academy are beginning to move forward. These need firming up so that a definitive longer-term plan for the school's future is in place.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

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

The school's improvement 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, the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham and as below. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Chapman

**Associate Inspector**