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Mr M Davidovic
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Davidovic

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Lawnswood School

Following my visit with Peter McKay and Christine Harrison, additional inspectors, to your school on 23 and 24 May 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since the previous monitoring visit – satisfactory

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed but appointed after discussing briefly and confirming any such appointment with Ofsted, if possible with the HMI who is monitoring the school's improvement.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Leeds local authority.

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Lawnswood School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 May 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders including those with responsibility for safeguarding, groups of students, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection a small number of teaching posts have changed or vacancies been filled, for example, in science and in English. Some have been filled on a temporary basis, others on a long-term supply basis. A community police officer has been attached to the school for two days per week and an appointment has been made to a new, additional post of health and safety officer.

A small number of teachers are due to leave at the end of the summer term 2010. The headteacher has announced he will leave at the end of the autumn term 2010. The appointment process for a new headteacher has begun.

Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The published analysis of the 2009 GCSE results confirms that students' attainment was low at the time of the school's previous inspection in September 2009. The school's predictions for these results proved to be broadly accurate. Its current data indicate a likely improvement in GCSE results in summer 2010.

Students' progress is improving. Attendance is better than it was so that more pupils are able to build up their understanding steadily, without the gaps that are the inevitable result of missing lessons. Fewer lessons are now interrupted by poor behaviour. Students say that teaching is more engaging and enjoyable than it was. They particularly enjoy lessons where they are actively involved and can learn for themselves. Nevertheless, there are still too many lessons in which the pace is rather slow. Learning is further restricted by an undercurrent of chatter, fidgeting and inattentiveness that teachers do not always challenge sufficiently.

Students' progress is better than it was, particularly in Year 7 where students have not been affected by earlier weaknesses in teaching. However, initial analysis of the school's tracking data raises some concerns that require further investigation. For example, students' progress in English in Key Stage 3 is not as good as it has been



in previous years. This has been adversely affected by staffing difficulties that are now gradually being resolved.

The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities was identified as a weakness in the previous monitoring inspection. The school has now separately identified those students whose problems arise predominantly from poor attendance and is tackling those specific difficulties. Students who have major learning needs are supported satisfactorily but those with less severe difficulties are not always given tasks which precisely match their needs. Support assistants do not always work as effectively as they might to support a range of students. As a result, the particular student to whom they are assigned is not able to become more independent.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Since the previous monitoring visit a member of the senior leadership team has assumed overall responsibility for improving behaviour. Further strategies have been put into place, with some evidence of success. The electronic recording system for monitoring behaviour has allowed interventions to be more closely targeted at individual students and groups who are causing particular concern. A drive on improving behaviour in Year 9 resulted in a fall of over 40% in the number of incidents of negative behaviour, significantly greater than that for the school as a whole. A campaign to tackle the most common type of poor behaviour – a refusal to follow instructions – led to a reduction of nearly one-third in such incidents across the whole school.

Closer attention is now being given to investigating the links between misbehaviour and poor attendance or low levels of literacy, with a number of students now receiving additional support in those areas.

Clearer procedures for referring and following up incidents of misbehaviour mean that significantly fewer remain unresolved. Further staff training in behaviour management has resulted in improved behaviour in lessons, though poor behaviour has not been eradicated. Inspectors observed instances of unruly and potentially unsafe behaviour which was not effectively picked up and dealt with.

The agreed procedures for dealing with misbehaviour in classrooms are still not implemented consistently. Some teachers ignore low-level disruption which, while it may not affect the learning of the class as a whole, limits the progress of the students involved.

A range of strategies to promote attendance have been implemented. These include a focus on individual students, or groups of students, such as those who persistently do not attend school and those whose attendance is slipping. The school now monitors and analyses data on attendance much more closely. Links with primary



schools are helping to spot students who may already have problems with attendance before transferring to Year 7, allowing intervention at an earlier stage.

The school has made good efforts to ensure that parents are better informed about the importance of good attendance. Direct parental access to the database of attendance and behaviour gives parents prompt and up-to-date feedback so that they can work together with the school more effectively to support their child. Attendance information has been given prominence in reports on students' progress. Further initiatives have made all staff more aware about checking attendance. After-school activities are encouraging some students to see coming to school in a more positive light.

Procedures for managing attendance on a day-to-day basis are more secure, supported well by the local authority education welfare officer. Some discernable improvement can be seen in attendance figures, though the school has still a long way to go to reach the national average.

Punctuality shows little improvement. Teachers record late arrivals to lessons and there is a system of sanctions to follow this up. However, too many students still drift into lessons late, showing little sense of urgency about getting there on time. A number of students are late for school in the morning.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve attendance so it is at least in line with the national average – satisfactory

- Improve students' behaviour by ensuring consistent implementation of strategies for behaviour management across the school – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

The school's managers have begun to tackle underperformance in teaching more decisively. Closer monitoring and regular observations of lessons, together with a good, personalised system of one-to-one coaching to support improvement in teaching skills, are proving to be of benefit. The school's records show a number of staff whose lessons have improved to be satisfactory, rather than inadequate. However, as there have been a number of changes in staff since the first observations were carried out, the proportion of lessons that are inadequate remains too high, though the picture overall is improving. A good programme of staff training has continued, drawing on the expertise of advanced skills teachers and the good practice that already exists within the school.

Inspectors saw a mixture of good and satisfactory teaching, and at times, outstanding lessons. However, there still remain instances where pace in lessons is not well managed and so disruptive behaviour slows up learning.



Teachers assess students' attainment regularly and the school has a satisfactory system for tracking progress. Teachers make appropriate use of this to identify underachievement and take action to get students back on track. Students know both their target levels or grades and the level at which they are currently working, though their knowledge of how they might get to the next level is patchy.

The school does not make enough use of its assessment data to look in detail at the progress of the various groups of students. Leaders do not use the data to help them make deductions about the effectiveness or otherwise of the school's initiatives, nor to encourage teachers to be more accountable for the progress of their students.

Consequently, though lessons are well planned and structured, teachers often do not consider sufficiently the full range of students' needs or abilities in their class when planning lessons. There is little evidence that learning activities or tasks are being adapted to suit. This has a knock-on effect on enjoyment for some students, because work is not always pitched at the appropriate level to challenge them and move their learning on.

The school recognises this and the importance of having a curriculum that meets students' needs better so that they enjoy school more. A wider range of suitable courses and curriculum pathways for Year 10 are planned for September 2010. Greater priority is also being given to improving students' literacy skills, as key to accessing the curriculum and being able to achieve. Work on reinforcing literacy skills has already begun. From September 2010, an increased proportion of lesson time in Years 7, 8 and 9 is to be given over to developing literacy.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise the quality of teaching by making sure that staff have sufficiently high expectations of students and plan learning effectively – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

With support, leadership capacity continues to improve. Senior leaders have a stronger grasp of their respective roles and have gained confidence in exercising them. Improvement can now be seen on all the areas for improvement. Increasingly, leaders and managers are working together, for example, where one aspect overlaps with another, such as behaviour and attendance, to analyse data, compare approaches and take decisions. As a result, a more cohesive approach to implementing the strategies for improvement has begun. Working groups involving school leaders, governors and local authority representatives to monitor the school's progress reinforce this approach still further. Governors have established good mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. They are now providing greater challenge to the school's leaders.



The impact of the school's specialisms on raising students' achievement is satisfactory and increasing. The mathematics and computing departments lead the way in exemplifying good practice in teaching and learning, for example, in sharing this with other subject departments and in leading whole-school training on aspects of assessment. Since the previous monitoring inspection the impact of the specialisms within the community has grown considerably. For example, both information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics specialists deliver lessons in the primary schools and lead transition projects; and an ICT specialist teaches courses leading to accreditation in a city learning centre.

The school is making good progress in addressing safeguarding issues. Students say that they feel safe, that behaviour in lessons and around school continues to get better and that bullying is not an issue. Sixth form mentors play a useful role in advising and supporting younger students who may be unhappy. 'We respect the teachers and they respect us', is a telling comment made by one student to an inspector about the improved relationships between staff and students.

The school seeks students' views more regularly. It has conducted surveys to check students' perceptions of whether and how the school is improving. These show a positive, improving picture. The school council has been reinvigorated and is getting actively involved in decisions made in school. Some students have become involved with the community in ways that are helping to address negative perceptions of behaviour, for example, through attending the community forum.

Communication with home and home-school links are much improved. Parents have been given direct access to the school's database of behaviour, attendance and achievement. There is very good curricular input on keeping safe. Of particular note are the good, innovative ideas and effective practice on promoting e-safety with students, their families and among staff. These include: extensive monitoring of staff and student internet use; staff helping parents to gain the computer skills they need to access a school website aimed at supporting them in safeguarding their children; and staff being trained on safeguarding issues related to using internet resources to prepare lessons.

There are approved plans to extend some of the successful approaches from the 'nurture group' in Year 7 to a greater number of classes in the new Year 7 from September 2010. The intention is that this will ease transition from primary school and that students will be taught in ways that encourage positive attitudes to learning from the outset. A small, 'satellite' provision is due to open nearby, aimed at a small group of Key Stage 4 students identified as being particularly disaffected.

Since the previous monitoring visit, lines of accountability for safeguarding have been clarified, with one senior member of staff in overall charge, supported by a coherent team of leaders responsible for various aspects. There are formal systems to record relevant management meetings and to communicate information. The



single central register of staff is monitored carefully and kept up to date, meeting regulations. Suitable systems are in place to deal with any concerns raised in connection with child protection and to identify and follow up any wider school issues.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that systems and procedures for the safeguarding of students are fully effective – good

External support

The support provided by the local authority and the School Improvement Partner is good and has enabled the school to make at least satisfactory progress since the previous monitoring visit on all the key issues for improvement. In particular, the local authority has provided good advice on strategies to improve attendance and has intervened directly to support the school in monitoring and evaluating how effective the actions taken have been.

The headteacher and senior leadership team have benefited from the continued guidance of a part-time consultant headteacher in shaping their leadership skills further. Specialist advanced skills teachers have worked effectively with a small number of subject departments to share good practice in teaching and learning.

The school and authority together are actively exploring ways of working in collaboration with other schools to plan for future developments in the curriculum. To this end, for example, the school is involved in the 'Gaining Ground' initiative, working with link schools to look at ways to promote achievement further.