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Dean Coombes
Deansfield Community School, Specialists in Media Arts
Deans Road
Wolverhampton
WV1 2BH

Dear Mr Coombes

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Deansfield Community School,
Specialists in Media Arts**

Following my visit with Gary Anderson, Additional Inspector, to your school on 24–25 June 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement 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 newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. However, this can only be in consultation with me.

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Wolverhampton.

Yours sincerely

Gwendoline Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, so that it is at least good for all students by making sure that all teachers:
 - make accurate assessments of the levels students are working at, especially at Key Stage 3
 - match work to the different ability levels in their class so that it is neither too easy nor too difficult for students especially those on school action
 - regularly tell students how they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work
 - help students to improve their literacy and communication skills through telling them about errors in spelling or grammar and supporting them to improve their handwriting.

- Make sure all students make at least good progress, so that the standards they reach, particularly in English and mathematics, are sustained at a level which is at least equal to national averages by ensuring that:
 - the work that is planned for students in Key Stage 3 recognises what students can already do and builds on this
 - students are given opportunities to develop their skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics and to use these in other subjects
 - students who receive support from teaching assistants or other adults are not reliant on this support but develop their ability to think really hard about their work.

- Improve leadership so that all students achieve well by:
 - making sure that all students receive their full entitlement to the National Curriculum and religious education, and that school leaders recruit subject specialist teachers to teach humanities subjects
 - providing support for all students who have weak literacy skills so that they are identified early, and an effective support programme is quickly put into place
 - carrying out frequent checks on the quality of the school's work by observing teaching more frequently and using information on the progress made by students to inform judgements on the quality of teaching over time
 - developing a more effective system for checking on the progress being made by students, so that clear information can be provided to school leaders to enable them to identify and take action where progress is slow
 - making sure there is a school improvement plan which has been shared with all staff and which is regularly updated
 - ensuring that pupil premium and Year 7 catch up funding are having a sustained effect on improving progress for the students who are entitled to these resources.

- Continue to build on the improvements that have already been seen in attendance to ensure it remains above the national average by:
 - monitoring closely the attendance of all students including groups such as disabled students and those who have special educational needs or who are supported by pupil premium funding
 - working more closely with parents, carers and external agencies.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 24–25 June 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and the school improvement adviser commissioned by the local authority. Joint learning walks with middle and senior leaders involved the observation of parts of 15 lessons. In addition, inspectors visited an assembly and observed students around the school at the start and end of the day, and during break and lunch times.

Context

No significant changes have been made to staffing since the last monitoring inspection. The school will move to a new building from September 2015 and its name will change to St Matthias.

Achievement of pupils at the school

School data indicate that most students are now making the progress they should in most subjects. GCSE predictions for 2015 suggest higher standards will be attained. School data also indicate that attainment in mathematics is moving closer to the national average. Students' literacy skills, including their oral skills, are improving.

The progress made by students eligible for pupil premium funding is improving. However, the gaps between their performance and that of other students, both in the school and nationally, although narrowing, are still too wide. Based on their individual starting points, the majority of disabled students and those who have special educational needs are making progress in line with their peers. Students in the Amber Centre, who find it difficult to work effectively in mainstream classes, are making good progress.

The progress of students who join the school with Level 4 at Key Stage 2 is still a concern in some year groups; too many students in Year 8 are not making the progress they should. In some subjects, such as art, graphics and music, students make less progress than they should. In these subjects, GCSE predictions are well below national averages and do not appear to correlate well with in-year progress data. This raises questions about the accuracy of assessment, which the school is addressing.

The quality of teaching

Overall the quality of teaching is improving. In some subjects, this improvement is rapid and strong. According to school records, no teaching is now judged to be

inadequate. However, although considerably reduced, school data indicate that too much teaching is not yet good enough.

Students are positive about their teachers: about their relationships with them, about the support they receive and about the quality of teaching they get.

Teachers are now more aware of the importance of literacy in their lessons and are incorporating this more effectively in their planning. Compliance with the school's marking policy is high. All workbooks reviewed indicated that teachers are providing high-quality feedback and students are improving their work as a result. Students comment positively on the approach to marking and feedback in terms of consolidating their learning and encouraging them to review and reflect on their work. Teachers are becoming more skilful at meeting the needs of disabled students and those who have special educational needs. This is the result of greater emphasis on matching learning to students' individual starting points and particular needs, and more effective deployment of teaching assistants.

Where teaching is strongest, students have good attitudes to learning and listen well. Teachers use good question and answer techniques to challenge students of different abilities to think hard. They encourage students to answer questions using full sentences. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to design interesting learning activities that stretch and challenge students of all abilities to extend their knowledge and understanding and make good progress. There is an appropriate focus on literacy. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson about number sequencing, the teacher insisted that students respond to questions using technical vocabulary such as the 'sequence is ascending' rather than 'numbers are going up'.

Where teaching is weaker, not all questioning is well targeted or inclusive, and a few students dominate discussions and responses. Not enough is learnt and not all students are on task. Stretch and challenge for the most able is missing; some students finish their work quickly while others struggle to complete it. Teachers fail to inject a sense of urgency or enthusiasm about learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Whole-school attendance and the attendance of most individual groups of students have improved since the last monitoring inspection. Overall, the attendance of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is in line with other students in the school. However, within this group, the attendance of those in Year 10 who are also eligible for pupil premium funding is not improving as well as for other students. Punctuality is improving but more emphasis is needed to ensure not only that students arrive promptly but also that they arrive ready and eager to learn.

Good relationships exist between staff and students. Students report a marked improvement in behaviour this year, as a result of higher expectations by staff about

behaviour and attendance. Students are very aware of these changes and welcome them.

Alternative provision, which is mainly in school, enhances the care of, and support for, students. The student welfare team is effective in providing a range of interventions and services in partnership with other agencies and parents to support students who face difficult circumstances in their lives; for example, young carers.

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and are monitored regularly by the relevant member of the governing body. Students say they feel safe in school, that there is no bullying, and that they would know what to do, and who to tell, if they witness any. Students know how to keep themselves safe as a result of what they have learnt in lessons and through assemblies.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and senior leaders are having a positive impact on bringing about school improvement. The quality of leadership below this level is developing but is not yet strong enough and, as a result, some senior leaders and the headteacher carry a heavy burden of responsibilities. The skills of subject leaders are improving but are currently too variable, and this is reflected in outcomes for students across different subjects. Leadership in core subjects is strong but the good practice in managing and leading these areas is not yet evident in all other subjects.

Data analysis and evaluation have improved but further improvement is still needed to ensure that leaders and governors have data that enable them to identify areas of concern promptly and efficiently and to act on this with urgency.

There is good support and an effective range of interventions for students who face difficult circumstances and for disabled students and those have special educational needs. Data about the progress of these students support this. However, there is currently no clear mapping of such provision or rigorous analysis and evaluation of its effectiveness. The school recognises this and the need to review leadership of this provision in order to bring about further improvements.

The school's self-evaluation indicates a thorough analysis of the current performance of the school and links well to an appropriate improvement plan that is regularly updated. However, whole-school self-evaluation is currently a 'top-down' process, involving only senior leaders. Subject leaders and other leaders responsible for different aspects of school life, such as special educational needs and literacy, are not yet required to formally evaluate these aspects. As a result, evaluation of these areas does not yet feed fully into whole-school evaluation and whole-school areas for improvement do not feed back into objectives and action plans for these areas.

Although there are many separate processes to assure the quality of provision and outcomes, these are not yet combined into a coherent and integrated approach that is clear to all members of staff.

The governing body is strong, very well informed and has high expectations of what students in the school can achieve. Its members consistently challenge school leaders to improve the quality of education provided.

External support

Good external support is helping the school to improve further. The school improvement adviser provides regular and consistently helpful guidance, including carrying out whole-school reviews with other external consultants. Reviews of subjects – for example, recently in art and graphics – are carried out by external specialists. Work with good and outstanding schools is helping the school improve the quality of education it provides; for example, in relation to moderation of assessment and visits to observe good practice.