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Ms Lena Wheatley
Interim Headteacher
Emslie Morgan Alternative Provision School
(Wirral Alternative School Programme)
235 Leasowe Road
Wallasey
CH45 8RE

Dear Ms Wheatley

Special measures monitoring inspection of Emslie Morgan Alternative Provision School (Wirral Alternative School Provision)

Following my visit to your school on 24 and 25 June 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 February 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 not appoint newly qualified teachers 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 Management Committee and the Director of Children's Services for Wirral.

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2013

- Improve teaching overall so that it is good or better in all year groups by:
 - ensuring science and ICT are taught by suitably skilled teachers
 - ensuring greater consistency in the practice of teaching staff
 - raising teachers' expectations about the amount and quality of work they should be expecting of students
 - ensuring that teachers set work that is appropriate to individual students' needs and makes them think and work hard
 - making sure that teachers provide lessons which engage and interest students so they will want to attend them.

- Improve students' behaviour and attendance by:
 - making sure that all staff apply school rules consistently in all situations, and with all students
 - ensuring all staff manage effectively minor misbehaviours in the classroom
 - developing strategies and approaches that encourage students to attend more regularly.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance by:
 - ensuring that the local authority and management committee understand and fulfil their respective roles, including the performance management of the headteacher
 - ensuring that leaders and managers do more to check the impact of what they do on improving the school's performance
 - making certain that all subjects including science and ICT are led and managed by effective, permanent members of staff
 - establishing how much money is received through the pupil premium and making sure this is used effectively to improve outcomes for students known to be eligible for support through this funding
 - providing practical equipment for students to use in science lessons and up-to-date reliable computers and other equipment to support teaching and learning in ICT.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 June 2014.

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised a wide range of documents and met with the interim headteacher, the interim deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, middle leaders, staff, members of the management committee and spoke on the telephone with the senior manager for school improvement from the local authority. I observed lessons in both key stages and met with students informally to discuss their experiences and views of the school. I visited three off-site providers of alternative provision (Cornerstones, Educ8 and Shaftesbury) that the school uses to provide a wider curriculum for groups of students in Years 10 and 11. I also attended a staff meeting about students' progress and behaviour for learning.

Context

The interim headteacher has been in post since February 2014. The substantive deputy headteacher returned to the school on a part-time contract and the interim deputy headteacher shares this post. The assistant headteacher returned to the school and has responsibility for inclusion and the nurture group. A middle leader has been appointed to monitor and evaluate how pupil premium funding is used to improve the progress for students; he has also been given the role of special educational needs coordinator. Five supply staff are covering staff absences.

The number of students on roll has increased from 69 to 82 since my last visit, consisting of 20 students in Key Stage 3 and 62 students in Key Stage 4. The school now uses providers for alternative provision; Rocket Training has been added since the last monitoring inspection.

The vacancy for a parent governor on the management committee has not been filled. An academy sponsor has been identified and is expected to take over the management of the school in January 2015.

Achievement of students at the school

Most Year 10 students, who have their educational programme based at school, recently undertook a successful work experience week, as part of their preparation for work course. The response from employers was very positive. Most Year 11 students are progressing on to further education, training or employment in September. However, six students have yet to confirm their next steps; they continue to be monitored and supported by the Connexions service so they have an opportunity to enter further education or training in the future.

The interim headteacher has introduced meetings to target support for any students not making expected levels of progress. The staff meeting I observed included discussion about the students' revised individual education and behaviour plans so that these could target behaviour, literacy and mathematics more effectively to support progress in class. The data on students' progress is being transferred onto a specialist database so that information can be analysed more effectively in September with the aim of improving reporting to parents.

The leader of external provision, in post since March 2014, has an excellent knowledge of the individual students and has introduced new, robust processes and procedures to track progress of students who attend off-site provision. As a result, reports on students' progress are analysed more rapidly; for example, a student who had chosen an inappropriate placement was mentored and successfully transferred to a more appropriate course. Students on home tuition are well supported and their progress is being tracked and appropriate support is being offered so they can reintegrate more quickly into school.

Staff have been trained to set up and run a nurture group for students who need more support: students' progress is improving as a result of more focused target setting. There is evidence in students' work of reading and mathematics skills improving in Key Stage 3 and a greater emphasis on improving reading skills is being supported across the school.

The quality of teaching

Teaching assistants are assigned to a subject area so they can support both students' learning as well as their behaviour. The effectiveness with which teachers match appropriate learning activities to students' abilities and interests has improved. This is as a result of training and better quality individual education and behaviour plans, which are more informative. Training has also focused on constructive feedback so students understand how they can improve their work. Verbal feedback to students during lessons is good; however, written feedback in books is not regularly followed up by students, to show they have understood how to improve their work.

Teachers' planning is more consistent due to a shared medium-term planning framework. The improved consistency of approach by staff can be seen in an improved learning environment where students' work is on display and achievements are celebrated. Students' skills in reading and understanding written texts have a stronger focus in all subjects. This is because students' reading levels are shared more widely with staff, which enables them to act more quickly and precisely because they have a better grasp of students' individual starting points.

Behaviour and safety of students

Students respond well to the improved facilities in the dining hall and use the area more sociably. The students' GCSE art exhibition is proudly on display there and appreciated by the majority of students. Staff and students worked collaboratively to improve the school entrance by painting 'welcome' in various languages on the wall and planting containers. Work displayed around the school reflects a shared commitment by students and staff to creating a positive learning environment.

Behaviour management, including the use of rewards, sanctions and specific behaviour targets, is used more consistently. As a result, behaviour has improved in the school. The number of incidents has reduced and the school's analysis of behaviour patterns confirms the positive impact of the nurture group in Key Stage 3. Attendance, at around 63%, remains too low. However, the ability to capture attendance information and respond has improved. The school's education social worker and senior leaders conduct home visits to engage parents and encourage improved attendance by the students.

Improved systems to monitor and evaluate the off-site provision are in place and students engaged positively in the hairdressing, construction and other courses during my visits.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Students' behaviour is more settled; staff roles and responsibilities are clearer and staff morale has improved since the last monitoring inspection. Middle leaders are empowered to manage and lead their specific areas and be responsible and accountable for improvement and development. Routines are not being regularly disrupted. Staff, at all levels, are willing to point out any lack of consistency for the benefit of all involved.

The management committee supports the interim headteacher and is working with the local authority regarding the analysis of the impact of pupil premium funding, whole-school data collection, and the school website which is nearing completion. However, the leadership of the school remains uncertain. The management committee does not have robust systems in place to check the impact of what leaders and managers do to improve the school's performance. The interim headteacher is employed on a short-term basis and has not been subject to a performance management review. There has been no self-evaluation of the school completed nor detailed action plan for the next academic year. The local authority report regarding the admission processes and role of the school has been received by the management committee but they are not aware of how this is to progress. The development of the leadership and management of the school remains uncertain because the conversion to an academy has been postponed until January 2015.

External support

The local authority continues to support the school by monitoring the progress of its action plan and providing financial support and advice with staffing issues. The local authority provided a consultant to work with the school to analyse the impact of the pupil premium funding and to support and challenge the development of the school's data systems. It also gave technical support to develop the school website.