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Mr S Brownlow
Headteacher
Kingsley College
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Dear Mr Brownlow

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Kingsley College

Following my visit with Michael Lafford, additional inspector, to your school on 6–7 December 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in 4 October 2010. 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 and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed provided they are mentored by senior staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2010

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning so that by September 2011 at least 70% of lessons are good or better, by ensuring that:
 - lessons are conducted at a consistently brisk pace
 - lesson planning is based on accurate knowledge of students' individual progress
 - students are encouraged to participate fully in lessons by taking more responsibility for their learning.

- Improve the curriculum by ensuring that:
 - planning across different subject areas more effectively supports and improves literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills
 - the range of courses and accreditations offered to meet the needs and interests of all students, especially the least able.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that
 - monitoring and evaluation practices at all levels are based on regular, accurate and robust assessments that lead to focused, precise and effective interventions to raise standards
 - the governing body has the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to regularly challenge the performance of the college.

Special measures: monitoring of Kingsley College

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 6–7 December 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior staff, heads of department, other teaching staff, the new Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors who were members of the strategy group, the same group of parents as the last monitoring visit, a representative from the local authority, one of the external partners providing support to the governing body, and four groups of students. They observed all staff teach. The procedures for safeguarding children were also checked and found to meet requirements.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in June 2011, there continues to be staffing turbulence: two heads of department have left the school and 14 new staff have joined, including a new assistant headteacher. A further five members of staff will leave at the end of this term and five have been appointed to start in January 2012. Four middle leaders with posts of responsibility for raising standards remain at the school but have relinquished their positions of responsibility. Five students have left the school, mainly from the sixth form and nine students have joined across the year groups. The school recruited below its admissions limit of Year 9 students in September 2011 and, as a result, the school has 19 spare places. There are currently two members of staff on maternity leave and the school uses two regular agency staff to cover absence; one will no longer be required from January 2012. The Chair of the Governing Body resigned and has been replaced by the Vice Chair.

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

Attainment across the school remains below the national average. However, since the last monitoring visit, the 2011 examination results have been published which demonstrate that standards have improved compared with the 2010 results. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics has increased by 10% to 49%. Outcomes in the core subjects of English and, to a lesser extent, mathematics have also improved. The same improvement is not evident in the sixth form at AS level, although standards in the BTEC examination improved in Year 12 and Year 13. There was a slight improvement in A2 results in 2011 so that students attained closer to the national average. At the previous inspection monitoring visit in June 2011, the school was over optimistic in its predictions of student examination outcome grades. Students attained lower than expected. Girls continue to attain higher standards than boys.

Relative to their broadly average attainment on entry to the school, the progress students made as they moved through the school was inadequate. However, current school data demonstrates that student progress is now beginning to accelerate. The accelerated reading scheme used in Year 9 continues to improve reading skills, which enables more students to access the curriculum. Identified poor readers or those with handwriting difficulties also receive targeted support and make progress. The greater focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and increased management action due to the closer monitoring of student progress, have resulted in more students making quicker progress. In Year 10, school data shows that those students making satisfactory or better progress has increased from 24% in 2010 to 81% in 2011. The same measure for Year 11 students shows an increase from 44% to 71%. While this is a positive development, these figures still highlight the unacceptable percentage of students who continue to make inadequate progress. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching has a direct correlation with the standards achieved and the progress students make. In the good or better lessons, students learn more and make quicker progress. The school has identified that there is less convincing progress in closing the gap in the attainment of key groups, for example boys, those known to be eligible for free schools meals and those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities now make better progress than at the last monitoring visit, and their rate of progress is better than that of other students.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour is now good throughout the school and in social areas. This is largely a result of the whole-school drive to improve the quality of teaching, especially the questioning skills of all teachers during lessons. Students are much more focused and engaged with their learning. One commented, 'We are all more attentive now, as we never know who is going to be asked the next question.'

Since the last visit, there have been no permanent exclusions and the number of fixed-term exclusions so far this year is the same as the same period in the previous year. These fixed-term exclusions have involved more pupils than last year. The reason for fixed-term exclusions of seven girls and 11 boys is for dissent. Attendance at school has improved and, at 94% since the start of term, is currently higher than the same period last year. The school is not complacent about the improved attendance but has set higher targets to improve the attendance of identified Year 10 girls. The school has also had a focus on ensuring that students are punctual for school in the morning. The closer monitoring of poor punctuality has had the impact of reducing the number of students late for school from 137 students per week at the start of term in September 2011, to 75 students when measured at the end of November 2011.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality and consistency of teaching has improved considerably since the last monitoring visit. There has been a strong and purposeful drive by the headteacher and senior staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. A teaching and learning group has been established to share good practice, provide one-to-one support and run whole-school training under the leadership of the new assistant headteacher. There has been a rigorous insistence that those middle managers or those with posts of subject responsibility should be required to teach at least good lessons. Some staff have relinquished their posts of responsibility and others have been provided with good coaching from the local authority to improve their teaching. Now, all senior leaders and heads of department teach good or better lessons. However, a small minority of other leaders with posts of responsibility are still unable to consistently teach good or better lessons. Other identified staff have received coaching. Since the last monitoring visit, the school's own monitoring of teaching judges that 65% of the teaching is now good or better. During this monitoring visit, sixty lessons were observed and all teachers were jointly observed by HMI with a member of the senior leadership team. 80% were judged to be good or better, a considerable improvement. School data demonstrates that 50% of staff have improved their teaching quality since the last visit as a result of the determined focus of the school's leadership. The school was set a target to improve the quality of teaching so that, by September 2011, at least 70% was judged to be good or better, and this target has been exceeded. The recently improved quality of teaching has not resulted in a comparable rise in attainment due to the legacy of underachievement.

The training and monitoring focus since the last visit has been to develop questioning strategies, greater use of plenary sessions during and at the end of lessons, and improved quality and consistency of marking. In all the lessons observed, questioning is now used more consistently, although still not enough questions sufficiently probe students' knowledge to extend their understanding. In the good or better lessons, questioning is used as a strong assessment tool and ensures that all students remain motivated and engaged. Less successful questioning uses closed questions that only require single word answers and does not challenge students to think enough. Wall displays do not contain key vocabulary or learning prompts for students to use in their responses, or examples of high quality work for students to aspire to. Some lesson activities are not designed with sufficient challenge for the more-able students. Mini-plenaries, or opportunities throughout the lessons to check that students understand the work, are still not used with sufficient differentiation or follow up to amend ongoing lesson plans. The marking of students' work has improved. All books are regularly marked but marking varies in quality between different teachers. Where books are marked well, students report that they find the comments and dialogue with the teacher useful to help them make quicker progress. Homework is set inconsistently and is also of variable

quality. In the best examples, it is used to prepare for lessons or extend learning after lessons. In the weaker instances, it is mundane completion of worksheets started in the lesson.

The curriculum is now mapped more strategically. A range of more suitable pathways allows students to access courses that meet their various needs. Good collaboration with another local school and college ensures that a good range of Level 1, 2 and 3 courses are available in the locality, both academic and vocational. The curriculum has been reviewed with the governors and those subjects demonstrating poor performance outcomes over time have been removed from the option choice. In addition, information and communication technology (ICT) will not be taken by all students from September 2012 but will be offered as an option choice. Within lessons, there are missed opportunities to enrich the taught curriculum. For example, students make insufficient use of ICT, are not sufficiently engaged in independent learning, and are not provided with enough opportunities for creative learning.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- raise the quality of teaching and learning so that by September 2011 at least 70% of lessons are good or better – good
- improve the curriculum – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher continues to lead with energy and determination with a clear vision of rapid improvement through high-quality teaching. The large turnover of staff is part of his drive to ensure that Kingsley students receive the highest quality teaching. The appointment of a new assistant headteacher and a number of new middle managers has strengthened leadership and has created a stronger culture of accountability and ambition. Staff morale is high. Teachers work hard and want to improve student attainment. The new head of English and head of mathematics, as well as a number of other new staff, have already made an impression. Professional accountability is accepted by all adults across the school. All heads of department are now required to write short-term action plans with measurable success criteria, similar to the whole-school action plan. They are held to account for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning, and raising attainment in their subject areas. All senior staff have had a much greater focus on monitoring agreed actions in the short-term action plan. Regular evaluation of lessons enables senior staff to measure the impact of their actions, including the directed support provided for identified staff. This demonstrates a good example of monitoring and evaluation at a strategic level that informs future actions. As a result of the stronger focus on accountability of leaders and managers at all levels and the greater clarity and

accuracy of monitoring student progress, attainment is predicted to be even higher in 2012 to match or possibly exceed the national average. However, there remain teaching and management inconsistencies which senior staff are now much more aware of and are working very proactively to resolve.

A group of governors have formed a strategy group and have received good training from one of the external partners in how to hold the headteacher to account. While there is still work to do, this group is now much more aware of school progress data and performance issues that face the school. The questions they ask are becoming much more detailed, focused, perceptive and challenging.

It is highly appropriate that the school is currently not using its specialist focus on the Performing Arts as the key driver to raise whole-school attainment.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – good.

External support

There has been good, targeted support from the local authority who have also brokered other support services. Support for identified staff to improve teaching quality has had a positive impact, as have links with two local outstanding schools, recently designated as 'Teaching Schools'. The short-term action plan has been used well by the school and external agencies to focus appropriate external support and measure its impact. Good success and impact measures are used by the school to gauge the success of external support on identified staff, for example to improve teaching quality. These impact and success measures ensure good value for money of external support services. Bespoke training has also been highly appropriate for the governors' strategy group who, as a result, now challenge the headteacher more about targets achieved, the progress in improving teaching quality and the pace of student progress.

Priorities for further action

- Ensure that homework is used more effectively, and monitored more strategically, to prepare students for new learning or extend and consolidate key concepts from lessons.
- Further extend literacy skills throughout the school by developing classroom learning displays that highlight key subject vocabulary for specific units of work to stimulate a language for learning, and provide examples of high quality work.