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5 July 2012

Mrs Hilary Harris, Executive Headteacher
Mr Richard Berry, Acting Headteacher
Bristol Gateway School
Long Cross
Bristol
BS11 0QA

Dear Mrs Harris and Mr Berry

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Bristol Gateway School

Following my visit to your school on 3–4 July 2012, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2011. 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 – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed

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 the City of Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2011

- Urgently improve the quality of students' learning, progress and attendance.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - have sufficient subject knowledge
 - tailor work to the individual needs of students
 - apply consistent behaviour management and deploy additional adults effectively.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum so that there is sufficient coverage and progression in all subjects.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - reviewing the current structure and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of leaders, including governors
 - providing appropriate professional development so that all leaders play a full part in accurately monitoring the school's performance and driving improvement.

Special measures: monitoring of Bristol Gateway School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 3–4 July 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior staff, teaching and non-teaching staff, three groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and an officer from the local authority. Nine lessons were observed.

Context

Following consultations with the Department for Education, the local authority and governing body are pursuing the possibility of the school becoming an academy from March 2013. They are seeking a local sponsor.

There is a new leader for assessment and a new Chair of the Governing Body. The executive headteacher and acting headteacher will be leaving at the end of this term and an interim headteacher will lead the school from September 2012. The local authority continues to retain financial responsibilities.

The derelict buildings that surround the school site are creating significant health and safety concerns. Demolition of the disused buildings is planned for the autumn.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Continuing the good work of the executive headteacher, the new leader for assessment has provided a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of students' progress for this academic year. It shows that Key Stage 4 students have made up for some lost learning and are generally on track to reach expected attainment. For the second year running, Year 11 students have all left with some nationally accredited awards. The underachievement of the current Year 10 students when they were in Key Stage 3 has been eradicated. Four students recently took GCSE art a year early and are now studying the subject at AS Level. The progress of Key Stage 3 students is not so positive. In English and mathematics, their achievement this year is inadequate. Progress in science across the school is good.

Students' progress is affected by the quality of teaching. Key Stage 4 students have made better progress because the teaching is meeting their needs more consistently and additional support has been targeted for literacy and numeracy to make sure that gaps in their learning are addressed. Key Stage 3 students have been most adversely affected by staff absence and weaker teaching.

While improving, attendance rates remain too low and are not improving fast enough. This is now the most significant barrier to students' progress. Addressing a legacy of very poor attendance, particularly for Key Stage 4 students, remains an on-going challenge. Although some students have doubled their attendance as a result of good support from staff, it is still too low. Students are generally poorly motivated to attend school every day and this is compounded for some by an educational experience that is too variable in quality. One of the most important factors hindering the further improvement students' attendance is that not all lessons provide enjoyable, creative, well-organised and challenging experiences.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- Urgently improve the quality of students' learning, progress and attendance – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous visit. There is less staff absence. This, together with better planning, better management of students' behaviour and more appropriate deployment of support staff leads to greater consistency in teaching and learning. There are higher expectations of students to complete work independently, although presentation of their work is not always as good as it should be. Teachers have improved their practice as a result of good individual support from within, and external to, school. Most teaching is at least satisfactory, with a greater proportion of good teaching. In art and physical education, some teaching is outstanding, reflecting high quality behaviour management and subject knowledge. School and local authority observations of teaching confirm this picture.

There is still some way to go to ensure that all students make at least satisfactory progress over time and that they enjoy their learning. Students' behaviour and learning are not always challenged sufficiently because inconsistencies remain in behaviour management and in tailoring learning to students' different needs, abilities and interests. Students are very aware of this and accept that their attitudes to work vary according to who is teaching them. They want more consistency.

Improving assessment is highlighted for development next term. Currently, teachers do not make best use of students' prior knowledge to individualise learning and work is not marked in ways that support students in taking ownership of how to improve their skills and understanding. Revised individual programmes will be in place next term and will identify any additional support for special educational needs, in addition to students' behavioural and general learning targets.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In general, students are ready and willing to learn, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The school day starts promptly and most students move from one lesson to the next without too much interruption. Year 7 students have not yet established good attitudes to work or towards one another. When given high expectations for behaviour and learning, students respond well and this helps develop their resilience. But expectations are inconsistent and the importance of staff providing consistent and appropriate role models is not well understood by all staff.

In general, students are not sufficiently able to talk about how well they are doing or the strategies that are helping them to do better. However, they articulate very clearly that they want rules and boundaries to be set and adhered to consistently. They like the new points system, which has allowed many to cash in their deposits for activities or goods of their choice. They say that students' behaviour has improved and that learning has a much higher profile than in the past.

Implementation of a new strategy that addresses serious incidents within school as an alternative to exclusion is helping to increase attendance and to establish greater accountability on students to accept the consequences of their actions. There is a generally downward trend of exclusions this academic year, although an increase this term. There is a significant reduction in the number of students requiring 'catch-up' for work missed when out of lessons.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Staff are very positive about the future and can see how the provision has improved. This is testament to the good work of the executive headteacher and acting headteacher. Over the past year, they have successfully brought the school to the position where the right things are in place and are sufficiently well established for continued improvement. Evaluations of the quality of the school's work are accurate and are used well to inform future plans. Senior leaders play an increasingly active and well informed part in the school's improvement. The impact of this work now needs to accelerate to make a greater difference to students' achievement and attendance. Clear and consistently high expectations on students' learning and behaviour are not yet the norm.

Able led by the coordinator, the curriculum continues to improve. A revised timetable and curriculum map are in place for September. For Key Stage 4 students, this gives the most comprehensive options for examinations so far and is a realistic offer for this point in the school's development. For Key Stage 3 students, it provides an

appropriate balance of subjects and additional support to make up for the disruption to their learning this year. Leadership of mathematics is now secure, although the department still lacks some subject specialists. It is not yet clear how well students' additional special needs are supported throughout the curriculum or how systematically students are taught to read, spell and write legibly.

Students say that Gateway is more like a school now and this is reflected in improvements to the environment, as well as to the curriculum and teaching. Displays and resources are of better quality and the playground has been resurfaced and marked out for games.

The governing body has grown in strength. The new Chair revised the structure of the school improvement committee. This is helping to focus more clearly on holding staff to account by requiring them to provide robust evidence to governors of the impact and quality of actions.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve leadership and management – satisfactory.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum so that there is sufficient coverage and progression in all subjects – satisfactory.

External support

At a time when the school's future status is uncertain, the local authority, together with the governing body, is taking appropriate steps to ensure that senior staff remain focused on the most important things that will improve outcomes for students, for example the appropriateness of the local authority retaining financial responsibilities and the appointment of an interim headteacher while the possibility of becoming an academy is considered.

External consultants have provided considerable good support to the senior leadership team and individual members of staff. This has improved teaching, although some staff have embraced this more than others.