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20 March 2013

Mr Tom Hollis
Vice Principal
Bicester Community College
Queen's Avenue
Bicester
OX26 2NS

Dear Mr Hollis

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bicester Community College

Following my visit to your school on 19 March 2013, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2012.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Vice Principal, a member of the new Interim Executive Board (IEB) who also represented the local authority, a group of senior leaders and the interim executive headteacher designate. The local authority's statement of action was evaluated. There was no school's improvement available for evaluation.

Context

Since the inspection an assistant headteacher and an additional learning support teacher have been appointed. The number of students on roll has decreased from 963 to 954. An application by the local authority to the Department of Education to remove the governing body and appoint an IEB was recently granted and they met for the first time about a week before the monitoring visit. The substantive Principal is currently on leave and the headteacher of a local secondary school has agreed to take on the role as interim executive headteacher from mid-April when the college returns from its spring break.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

In the absence of the headteacher and a governing body, an independent consultant has been commissioned by the local authority to write the statement of action for the college. The priorities highlighted in the statement of action link closely with the findings of the inspection report. The independent consultant has highlighted accurately the priorities identified in the inspection report. However, given that the consultant was requested to work in isolation from the college to prepare the statement of action, it fails to identify those who will be responsible for monitoring the success of actions. There are no clear milestones to measure the success of the planned improvements and there is a lack of clarity in the urgency to improve teaching and raise student achievement. Although the college has kept parents up to date with changes at the college, the statement of action does not include plans to inform them regularly or take their views into account.

Since the inspection, the college has completed a number of faculty reviews of teaching and has introduced a consistent approach to making learning more visible for the students. The training provided by local schools has been well received and greater attention to student behaviour is being given the attention it needs. Nevertheless, there is no school plan to coordinate these improvements or systems to evaluate success.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Board and the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector