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18 October 2013

Mrs S Tufnell
Headteacher
Barnwood Park Arts College
St Lawrence Road
Gloucester
GL4 3QU

Dear Mrs Tufnell

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Barnwood Park Arts College

Following my visit to your school on 18 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection, which took place in February 2013. 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 the serious weakness designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Sue Barkway
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the proportion of good or better teaching and ensure that it meets the needs of all students by insisting that:
 - teachers use information about students' abilities to plan lessons that meet all their needs
 - all teachers regularly check the progress students are making, giving extra help or more challenge when necessary
 - teachers give students high-quality feedback about how well they are doing and what specific things they need to do to improve
 - staff manage behaviour consistently well in all lessons so that there are no disruptions to learning
 - teachers make sure that all students in every lesson know what they are learning and what they need to do to be successful
 - teachers in all subjects develop students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics more effectively
 - opportunities to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding within lessons are maximised.

- Significantly raise the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grade A* to C, including English and mathematics, by:
 - accelerating the progress that all students make in mathematics
 - making sure that the achievement of disabled students, those with special educational needs and those eligible for pupil premium improves quickly
 - increasing the proportion of A and A* grades that students achieve by challenging the more able students effectively

- Make sure that all subject leaders are equally effective in improving the quality of teaching and raising standards of achievement.

- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body in order to increase its capacity to challenge the school and hold it to account.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18 October 2013

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. She also met with a group of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and the heads of faculty for English and mathematics. In addition, the inspector observed four parts of lessons, all of which were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team, visited mathematics intervention sessions and reviewed school documentation, including data on pupil progress and attendance, and reviews by the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, a new business manager has been appointed to the school and there have been a number of changes to middle leaders, including the appointment of an acting head of English.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Leaders and managers have taken a rigorous approach to the implementation of the school action plan and, as a result, there is evidence of significant improvements. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching are leading to a rapid increase in the proportion of teaching which is consistently good or outstanding. Improved teaching, combined with robust procedures for tracking students' progress and monitoring the impact of interventions, is resulting in a greater proportion of students making expected or more than expected progress. Key Stage 4 results in 2013, in particular average points scores, show a significant rise over previous years. School predictions for 2014 are that this improving trend will continue. The gap between the progress made by students eligible for pupil premium funding and other students in the school is narrowing. The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is also improving. However, the school needs to continue to target interventions carefully in order to ensure that the progress of vulnerable students is accelerated further. Performance and line management procedures have been reviewed and processes are now more rigorous. For example, all line managers are trained in lesson observations and in planning challenging targets and there are weekly timetabled meetings with all subject leaders. Staff have responded very well to the rise in expectations and morale is high, as evidenced by a dramatic reduction in the number of staff absences caused by illness.

The governance of the school has also improved. An external review identified some areas for development, which the governing body has responded to quickly. The Chair of the Governing Body provides strong leadership. For example, she has ensured that the committee structure and terms of reference are appropriate and enable the governors to receive the information they need to challenge and support

the school. Governors have received appropriate training and, as a result, have a much greater awareness of their roles and responsibilities.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The reorganisation of classes and sets is enabling greater flexibility and ensuring that students' needs are met.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the quality of teaching.
- The heads of faculty for English and mathematics are becoming increasingly effective in improving the quality of teaching and raising standards of achievement.
- Consistency in the procedures for assessing students' work is resulting in an accurate understanding of the levels at which students are working and of what they need to do to move to the next level.
- Professional development, including support plans for individual teachers, is successfully improving the quality of teaching.
- Students are very positive about the changes made. As one student said, 'Tell the headteacher to keep going the way she is.'
- Marking is improving and there is now a more consistent approach, with some examples of very effective marking.
- Behaviour has improved. Students say that there is less disruption in lessons and school data show that there has been a reduction in the number of exclusions. There is an appropriate level of support for students involved in exclusions and care is taken to ensure that issues are resolved so that all students are safe in school.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The lack of a systematic progressive approach to teaching letters and sounds for those students who are behind in reading and writing is hindering their progress.
- There is too much variation in the quality of intervention sessions in mathematics. Whilst the quality of teaching in some is outstanding, in other groups it requires improvement.
- Some students are still not aware of their levels or targets and, as a result, they are not clear about what they need to do to improve.

External support

The local authority is providing good support to the school. The regular project meetings and external reviews have helped to ensure that the school is on track to meet the milestones and success criteria identified in the action plan. Senior leaders have benefited from their involvement in joint lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work with representatives from the local authority. In addition, the appointment of two additional governors for a fixed-term period has provided valuable support and coaching to the governing body. The local authority has recognised that the progress that the school is making towards the removal of the

serious weaknesses designation and is rightly working towards gradually reducing the level of external support.