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6 March 2014

Mr Colin Turner
Headteacher
Etone College
Leicester Road
Nuneaton
CV11 6AA

Dear Mr Turner

Special measures monitoring inspection of Etone College

Following my visit with Ian McNeilly Her Majesty's Inspector and Clare Saunders Additional Inspector to your academy on 4–5 March 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 23 April 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 academy is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school's action plans are not fit for purpose.

I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

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

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that every student's progress is good or better by:
 - providing teachers with the advice and support they need to teach well making sure that all teachers consistently apply school policies for assessment and monitoring of students' progress
 - ensuring that marking provides students with guidance that enables them to improve their work and meet their targets.

- Raise achievement in all subjects and especially in English and mathematics and ensure that all students make good or better progress by:
 - improving students' reading, writing and presentation skills in all subjects
 - improving students' mathematical understanding and skills in all subjects.

- Improve leadership and management across the school so that all staff are held accountable for their teaching and all students make at least good progress by:
 - ensuring that all staff have clear roles and responsibilities, which are clearly linked to the school improvement plan
 - clarifying line management responsibilities to make all staff accountable for improving teaching
 - making sure that the school's improvement plans include end-of-year attainment and progress targets for each year group and all subjects
 - monitoring all students' progress at least half termly so that school leaders, including governors, know whether the school is on track to meet its targets.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 4–5 March 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, a range of staff, groups of students and two members of the interim governing body.

Context

On 1 February 2014 the academy joined the Matrix Trust. This trust currently involves the Barr Beacon School, Walsall. This school was judged to be outstanding at its Ofsted inspection in January 2014. Since joining the trust there have been a number of changes:

- the academy's headteacher is now accountable to the executive headteacher of the Matrix Trust
- the academy's governing body was dissolved and has been replaced by an interim governing body, and
- the academy is receiving substantial additional support from the Barr Beacon School.

Two assistant headteachers have resigned. Three teachers have also left the academy and have been replaced by two teachers. The academy's senior leadership team is currently being augmented by senior leaders from Barr Beacon School.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the last monitoring visit in September 2013, information has been published which allows comparison of the academy's performance in the 2013 GCSE examinations with other schools nationally. This information shows that students' progress had declined and was inadequate. The progress made by the students eligible for the pupil premium (the additional government funding for students eligible for free school meals and other groups), was particularly weak and represented a further decline from 2012 when they also made inadequate progress. The progress students made in English was in line with that expected nationally and better than in either mathematics or science.

Evidence from this monitoring visit shows that students continue to make noticeably better progress in English compared to mathematics and science because they experience more effective teaching in this subject. The progress students make in other subjects is variable, reflecting the inconsistencies in teaching across the academy. There is some evidence that students eligible for pupil premium are now making better progress. This improvement is because the academy is giving these students much more attention, including the recent introduction of additional coaching outside of lessons.

The progress students make varies a lot. Where teaching is more effective students of all abilities progress well because effective steps are taken to ensure that work is neither too easy nor too hard, and that students know precisely what is required for them to excel. As a result, students are able to work at a fast pace. In too many lessons students, particularly those in the younger year groups, do not work quickly enough and therefore make insufficient progress. This is because the work is not well enough matched to what they already know and can do, and they are unclear about what they are learning. This not only affects those eligible for the pupil premium and those that have been identified with special needs in the school action category, but also the more-able students.

Evidence was seen of improvements in students' literacy, including reading. The academy has correctly recognised that students often lack a sufficiently clear understanding of the meaning of key words such as 'explain', 'analyse' and 'evaluate'. In the more effective lessons, students made better progress because of the attention given to ensuring their understanding of these important terms. The academy's 'Drop everything and read' strategy is resulting in all students reading more. Less progress has been made improving students' mathematical understanding and skills in all subjects because this has yet to be made a priority.

The quality of teaching

Teachers are not adopting strategies to ensure that all students make the progress of which they are capable. Students were observed devoting too much time to copying so they had insufficient time to think critically about the lesson content. Particularly in mathematics, students work too slowly because no timed targets are given and they do not concentrate sufficiently on the questions they find challenging. There are exceptions to this; for instance, in a highly effective mathematics lesson on symmetry students were able to choose the worksheet they found challenging. Students progressed well because the teacher quickly intervened where this was needed to ensure they concentrated on the more challenging questions at the earliest opportunity.

There are times when the learning is slowed by insufficient use of effective questioning. For instance, the first correct answer is accepted and no attempt is made to check the understanding of other students, particularly when important ideas are being considered. Too often, teaching assistants are not well deployed because they do not have enough to do when teachers are working with the whole class.

There are some strengths in how targets are being used. All students have challenging targets and teachers are more aware of how well individual students are progressing. Particularly in Year 10 and 11, students are provided with objectives that relate to different GCSE grades. Where teaching is most effective, students are

able to concentrate on work that relates to their target grade. For instance, an English teacher expertly guided students so they became very clear about what was required for different level responses in their analysis of witchcraft in Arthur Millar's 'The Crucible'. This practice is less evident with younger age groups.

Reviews of learning are often ineffective, particularly towards the end of lessons. Too many opportunities are missed to use examples of good practice as they emerge in lessons to assist the whole class in better understanding how they can achieve at the highest possible level. Students do not receive sufficient praise and rewards for working hard and this is reducing the levels of productivity in lessons.

Marking is far too variable. There is some excellent practice, as seen in history where students quite rightly enthused about the perceptive comments they receive and the opportunities they have to respond to these. A small minority of books are rarely marked and students indicated that the delays in marking sometimes undermine the value of the comments they eventually receive. Students value some of the opportunities they have to self and peer-assess, but they correctly identified that there was variability in its effectiveness. This form of assessment was effective where teachers showed students how to mark work well using clear assessment criteria.

The academy is currently improving the support it provides for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Central to this is the much better identification of their needs and improved monitoring of the progress they are making. More individual coaching outside of lessons is being provided, particularly for those eligible for pupil premium. It is too early to fully evaluate the impact of these new initiatives.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Leaders are taking action to ensure that attendance information is fully accurate so they are able to more effectively monitor this aspect of the academy. The academy has also recognised that changes are needed to the way it manages behaviour as the current arrangements, involving students being removed from normal lessons, are not fully effective. Most students think that behaviour has improved although they also report that in a minority of lessons off-task behaviour occasionally interferes with learning. This is strongly linked to weaknesses in teaching.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The academy is falling well short of attaining the ambitious targets contained in its improvement plans. These targets, particularly those related to the quality of teaching, are unrealistic. Too many priorities are being addressed and not enough attention has been given to improving teaching. Although the academy has clear procedures related to teaching and assessment, these are not consistently followed

by all staff. While some underperformance is being challenged, leaders at all levels are not devoting sufficient attention to ensuring adherence to the academy's policies. As a result, students do not make enough progress in lessons because of continued weakness in teaching. Although a largely pertinent programme of professional development is in place, there has not been sufficient effective checking that all staff are able to respond effectively to the training they have received.

The interim governing body has only very recently been constituted and has yet to develop a track record to demonstrate its effectiveness. However, the members of the interim governing body are clear about their role and have an astute awareness of how the academy's performance compares to other schools, including the very low rates of progress made by students eligible for pupil premium. The staff from Barr Beacon School have an accurate view of the priorities that need to be addressed in order to accelerate the rate of improvement.

Despite the lack of progress in improving teaching, there are strengths in leadership. Senior leaders are aware of the adaptations that are needed to accelerate the rate of improvement. For instance, the need to ensure there is confidence in the accuracy of the termly information the academy has about the progress students are making so this can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of any improvements. The executive headteacher has correctly recognised the need to streamline and simplify many of the academy's procedures so there is improved consistency and greater accountability. All leaders are aware of the priority that needs to be given to ensuring different groups of students make better progress. This is being better reflected in the performance management targets for many staff.

External support

Much increased support for leaders at all levels has recently become available as a result of the involvement of Barr Beacon School. Staff spoke very positively about the opportunities this has given them to observe highly effective practice. The involvement of leaders from Barr Beacon School, including experienced governors, has the potential to increase the academy's capacity to improve.