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14 March 2014

Mr Robert Ellis
Executive Headteacher
Deptford Green School
Amersham Vale
London
SE14 6LQ

Dear Mr Ellis

Special measures monitoring inspection of Deptford Green School

Following my visit with Pam Fearnley, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Fatiha Maitland, Additional inspector, to your school on 11 and 12 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 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 school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 Executive Board (IEB), the Director of Children's Services for Lewisham and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that teaching is good or better throughout the school by:
 - making sure that the tasks teachers set in lessons are at the right level to get the best out of all students, especially the most able
 - developing the use of questions in lessons to check students' understanding and involve them more in their learning
 - improving feedback to students so that they know how to improve their work and checking that students act upon teachers' suggestions
 - making sure all teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour in lessons, the amount of work they do and the presentation of their work.

- Improve students' achievement in mathematics by:
 - eradicating weaknesses in mathematics teaching
 - improving their mathematics skills, especially in carrying out calculations and their ability to apply their skills to solving problems.

- Improve students' achievement in the sixth form by using information about their progress effectively to check how they are doing and ensure that all reach their challenging targets.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders, managers and the governing body by ensuring that:
 - systems for checking students' progress and the quality of teaching are used effectively to bring about the required improvements
 - newly appointed school leaders have the sufficient skills and confidence to be able to take full responsibility for improving teaching and achievement in their respective areas
 - governors are more active in monitoring the school and checking that agreed actions have had the intended impact.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 March 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, reviewed documents and scrutinised students' work in their books. Inspectors jointly observed teaching with senior leaders. Inspectors met with the executive headteacher and senior leaders, a group of middle leaders, a group of staff and two members of the IEB. The lead inspector met with three representatives from the local authority. Inspectors also met with three groups of students and talked to students informally around the school.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection two teachers have left the school. There are currently 856 students on roll.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's own internal assessment of students' progress confirms that more students are making more rapid progress, especially in mathematics and science. The combination of more accurate data about students' performance, improving teaching and guidance to students about how to improve, is securing better achievement at Key Stage 4. The school's accurate information on students' progress and work in books show that GCSE results for science and mathematics are on track to rise in 2014. Gaps between boys and girls in Year 11 are closing quickly and the in-school gap between students supported by pupil premium funding and their peers has reduced. Students' progress in English at Key Stage 4 remains a strength. Booster classes and intervention work with Year 11 are ensuring that students are well supported and have clear targets. The school has an accurate picture of those students who are currently at risk of not reaching grade C in English and mathematics. Equally, leaders and teachers are working hard to stretch the most able to attain A* and A grades in 2014.

The progress of students at Key Stage 3 is not improving as quickly as at Key Stage 4. Across Years 7 to 9, the gaps between boys and girls and those eligible for pupil premium and their peers are not closing quickly enough for both mathematics and English. The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs at Key Stage 3 requires urgent improvement. Students who speak English as an additional language are well supported and are continuing to do well.

The sixth form is being well led and the progress of sixth form students is improving rapidly. More teaching is becoming consistently good, helping students develop as scholars and work at an advanced level for their courses. Progress information shows that almost all of the 20 students in the sixth form are on track to reach or exceed their predicted grades this year. Their work shows commitment to research and reading around their subject to deepen knowledge. They enjoy the opportunity

to go and study at the library at Goldsmiths College, University of London. Sixth form students now receive well-considered personalised guidance. They confirm that their targets are reviewed regularly. Teaching skilfully questions students' knowledge and the very small groups mean that teachers can capitalise on this to monitor the progress of all students each lesson. Some students are also benefiting from individual tuition.

The quality of teaching

Teaching and the quality of marking are improving. Most teachers and additional adults are working well with their heads of department to meet the expectations set by senior leaders and the IEB. Senior leaders are working well with heads of houses and heads of departments to make sure they have the skills to develop better teaching of their staff and hold staff regularly to account for students' progress. These middle leaders are becoming more competent in using information about different student groups to identify strengths and gaps in their achievement that still need to close more quickly. However, the impact of their work is not yet securing consistently high-quality teaching, marking and feedback in all subjects throughout the school.

Some good teaching and progress were seen in English, mathematics, science, art, textiles and design and technology. In these lessons, teachers ask well-focused questions to check students' understanding and encourage them to expand their answers to justify their ideas. Students are increasingly articulate and in some lessons teachers quickly link the quality of students' work to assessment criteria and the progress they are making. A good mix of praise and constructive feedback is helping students do better. Inspectors also saw teaching that requires improvement because work is not pitched at the right level to help students do well in lessons.

The strong improvements in core subjects are not replicated throughout all subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4. Students say that in some lessons work is not interesting or challenging enough. As a result not all students make the progress they should in all of the subjects they study. Not all leaders are detecting where weakness in teaching remains. In some history, geography and music lessons students do the same work despite a wide range of ability in classes. In a history lesson about the Romans, over reliance on worksheets limited students' writing skills to show their knowledge. The work over time in students' books shows a lack of incisive development of historical understanding and a lack of challenge in marking to help students deepen their knowledge. In Year 8 music lessons students were working well on composition tasks but the lack of written scores, history work and recordings means that there is very limited evidence to show their progress over time. In these classes there are missed opportunities to develop and record students' understanding of genre and styles and understanding of music notation.

Books of some very low-ability students are poorly presented. Work is not planned well enough to develop students' basic skills in handwriting, grammar and spelling. The books of some of the most able students are also messy and untidy. In some instances, scrappy worksheets are appended into books or work is left unfinished with little if any response to teachers' feedback. Conversely, students who are proud of their work are diligent and their work is neat. They are taking responsibility for their learning and responding thoughtfully to teachers' comments. Their progress is rapidly improving. Students' work in design and technology, English, science and mathematics shows these qualities.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students are unanimous that behaviour has improved significantly. They confirm there are far fewer fractious incidents than previously, and it is a much calmer, safer school. In corridors, most students now move to lessons quickly and do not linger. Students confirm that any type of bullying is increasingly rare. If it occurs it is dealt with quickly. Students have a good understanding of all types of cyber bullying and appreciate assemblies, which keep them up to date with how to stay safe.

The behaviour policy is understood and followed by most students. They say the very few students who stray from this do so because teaching is boring and teachers or cover supervisors do not inspire them to listen and learn well. In a few lessons inspectors observed bored students who were disinterested with their heads on tables or who were calling out. This is no longer the norm and behaviour in lessons is much better than seen during the monitoring inspection in October. A minority of students at Key Stage 3 feel they do not learn very much when lessons are taught by cover teachers because behaviour can be slightly unruly.

Senior leaders are using more comprehensive information to monitor achievement, behaviour and attendance to assess students' progress, academically and in their attitude and conduct. The headline figure for attendance continues to improve but there are pockets where attendance is low. Disabled students, those with special educational needs and some who are supported by pupil premium funding are attending as regularly as their peers. Improving their attendance remains a priority. Pleasingly the number of fixed-term exclusions is continuing to decline significantly.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher and senior leaders are continuing to raise expectations and aspirations of students and staff. This is communicated well in the new school newsletter. Parents and carers now receive a clear message about what the school expects of students and how parents and carers can support their children to attend regularly and strive for excellence. Messages are unequivocal about the expectations concerning high standards of behaviour, student uniform and attendance.

Year 11 and sixth form students are very positive about the level of challenge they are now receiving to secure high grades in their examinations this year. They have high hopes for what they can achieve in the future and are keen to work well with their teachers to get the most from lessons, homework and extra study sessions. Teachers and additional adults are positive about leaders' work to help them improve their planning and teaching. In particular, training sessions for staff have had a positive impact in the mathematics and science departments. Leadership and teaching in both of these departments are much more effective than in October 2013. Information about students' progress in mathematics and science is used well by teachers to plan lessons that challenge the most able and give easier work to the less-able students.

Leaders and the IEB have tackled criticism from the previous monitoring inspection. Leaders examine students' progress information alongside first-hand evidence from teaching observations and work scrutiny. This is sharpening the focus on the quality of teaching over time. However, some of the forms completed by leaders are not detailed enough about the quality of students' subject knowledge developed over time.

The IEB is more demanding of senior and middle leaders to secure rapid improvement of the school. Since the previous monitoring inspection the quality of minutes from IEB meetings has improved and minutes now record detail about the impact of pupil premium funding. Many more middle leaders such as heads of houses are presenting their reviews to the IEB and are questioned intently about the impact they are having to close gaps in students' achievement. Greater attention must be given to the quality of students' work over time in all subjects to eradicate some inadequate practice.

External support

The effective working relationship with the local authority continues to help the school tackle areas of significant weakness. Local authority officers are sustaining high levels of challenge in meetings with the executive headteacher and IEB.

Advisers from the local authority for mathematics and science and partnership work with an advanced skills teacher have helped turn around these departments. The local authority has an accurate view of the progress of these departments and where strengths remain in other subjects, such as art and English. However, the recent review of teaching conducted in December 2013 points to a more positive picture about teaching and marking than that found by inspectors during this monitoring visit, notably for non core subjects. The percentage of teaching judged as typically good is too high, because some students are not making the progress they should, and in foundation subjects, teachers' practice is variable and inconsistent. Scrutiny of the progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs at Key Stage 3 lacks rigour and is insufficiently analysed.

The effective partnership work with Conisborough College, Colfe's School and Grinling Gibbons Primary School continues to support middle leaders in developing their leadership capacity. The new transition programme for Year 6 to Year 7 shows good impact of expertise from Grinling Gibbons Primary School.