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2 May 2014

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 2 May 2014, 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 third 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 third monitoring inspection on 2 May 2014

Evidence

The monitoring inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. During this inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. They also met with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and the subject leaders. In addition, the inspectors observed 13 parts of lessons, all of which were jointly observed with members of the senior leadership team, and reviewed school documentation, including information on students' progress and attendance, the school's self-evaluation statement and the central record of checks on staff.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has appointed two new teachers for English and mathematics, plus a temporary teacher for science. In addition, a member of the teaching staff is on long-term sick leave. There have been no other significant changes to staffing.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

This is a rapidly improving school. There is an extremely positive culture resulting from the supportive and no-blame approach taken by senior leaders and managers. All members of the leadership group are visible around the school, and staff and students feel valued. Leaders and managers have a very good understanding of the strengths and areas of development of the school. The school's self-evaluation is analytical, based on a secure body of evidence and, from scrutiny during the monitoring inspection, is also accurate. Leaders are rigorous in the way in which they track progress against the success criteria and milestones identified in the school's action plan. All actions in the original action plan (April 2013 to March 2014) have been completed and there is evidence of good impact from the actions taken.

Information on students' progress is well presented. It is clear and focuses well on key aspects of progress and attainment. Analysis is accurate and is used well to identify the impact and effectiveness of interventions. The school's information indicates an improving trend in both attainment and progress, and the gaps between the achievement of different groups of students are closing, including for those students who are eligible for pupil premium funding.

Subject leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities and, as a result, make a strong contribution to school improvement. They monitor and evaluate the work of their subject area on a regular basis and have a perceptive awareness of the strengths and next steps for development.

The Chair of the Governing Body provides strong leadership and governors have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Improved information, including regular and detailed reports from the leadership group, helps them to effectively monitor the progress being made by students, as well as progress being made against the school's action plan. As a result, the governing body has become much more effective in the level of challenge and support that it provides to the school.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- A range of interventions and additional support is contributing to improvements to the grades of individual and groups of students.
- There are clear criteria in almost all lessons that describe what students need to do to be successful. As a result, students know what is expected of them.
- In an increasing proportion of lessons, teachers' ongoing checks on students' progress help to ensure that work is at the right level for different groups of students and to identify misconceptions or errors in students' understanding.
- The quality of feedback given to students has improved significantly in some subject areas and there are examples of outstanding practice. Where marking and feedback are most effective, students have a very clear understanding of what they need to do to improve and they take on the advice so that their learning is accelerated.
- Behaviour has improved. Students report that there is far less disruption to learning in their lessons and their view is supported by evidence from the monitoring inspection where there was no evidence of disruption.
- Behaviour strategies are used well to manage and improve behaviour. For example, one student explained how a learning walk with a member of the leadership group had 'opened her eyes' to what was acceptable behaviour.
- Students say that they feel safe in school.
- Members of the school leadership group are perceptive and accurate in their judgements about the quality of teaching and areas for further development. They set appropriate targets for improvement and check regularly to see that teaching is improving as a result of the support provided.
- There is a more rigorous approach to setting targets for teachers in the school because of robust procedures and improved monitoring. This, combined with an effective training programme and support, has improved the quality of teaching so that the great majority of teaching is now good or better.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- In most subject areas, progress and the impact of teaching can clearly be seen from scrutiny of students' work in books and files. However, in other subject areas, it is much more difficult to evaluate progress over a series of lessons or over time because of the way in which evidence is collated and files are organised.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support to the school. It continues to monitor progress against targets in the action plan and has commissioned a wide range of professional development opportunities for leaders and teaching staff. Quite rightly, it has reduced the level of support because of increasing confidence in the capacity of the leadership group.