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14 May 2014

Jon Whitcombe  
Executive Headteacher  
Chaucer Technology School  
Spring Lane  
Canterbury  
CT1 1SU

Dear Mr Whitcombe

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Chaucer Technology School**

Following my visit to your school on 12–13 May, 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 February 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 is scheduled to close at the end of August 2015. During this period, leaders may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 Governing Body, the Education Funding Agency and the Director of Children's Services for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Farmer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - developing better assessment procedures, including better marking and feedback to students. so that they understand how to improve their work
  - challenging students more in lessons to engage their attention and accelerate their progress
  - ensuring teachers regularly check students' progress and make changes to their teaching if necessary
  - planning lessons which make it clear what students are expected to learn and which meet their different learning needs
  - ensuring teachers fully implement the school's behaviour policy
  - further improving attendance to maintain continuity in students' learning
  - ensuring the school's literacy policy is more rigorously implemented.
- Improve rates of progress, particularly in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and history, by:
  - ensuring teachers use performance data more effectively to inform their planning
  - building on the recent improvements in English and mathematics to make sure that students learn well in all subjects
  - developing students' literacy skills across different subjects.
- Improve rates of attendance, and reduce the number of students who are persistently absent.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - changing the staffing structure so that it provides for greater accountability for the quality of teaching and learning, and students' behaviour
  - ensuring there are regular and rigorous checks on the implementation of school policies.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 May 2014**

### **Evidence**

This inspection has focused predominantly on achievement, teaching, behaviour and safety in Year 10, as well as leaders' abilities to respond effectively to the unforeseen changes that have affected all students, their parents and carers, and staff since the last monitoring visit.

During the inspection, I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you, the head of school, the Chair of the Governing Body, a senior representative from the local authority and other senior leaders. I also spoke with parents and carers by telephone and with students in lessons. I observed jointly with senior leaders five Year 10 lessons and looked at their work. I scrutinised governing body minutes, local authority documentation, planning documents pertaining to health and safety arrangements for 2014/15, and new curriculum plans and staffing projections. I also scrutinised teaching and monitoring documentation, and current assessment data with particular reference to Years 10, 11 and the sixth form.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, which took place in November 2013, an over-subscribed neighbouring academy took the decision to increase its Year 7 intake in 2014 by two forms of entry. This has had a detrimental and irreversible effect on the projected numbers for Chaucer Technology School (CTS), triggering the following chain of events:

- taking account of the school's history of falling numbers and the significant reduction in staffing already necessitated, the local authority and governing body have concluded that the future of the school is no longer financially sustainable
- a full consultation process has been conducted and concluded with a proposal to close the school for all students with the exception of the current Year 10 going into Year 11, with effect from August 2014
- five consultation meetings have been held for parents and carers, with input at each from officers of Kent County Council
- a decision has been made by Kent County Council, following the consultation period to publish a Notice of Closure
- the local authority and school leaders have matched CTS students by post-code to the nearest local school with spaces, and places have been offered and accepted with a few appeals pending at the time of writing
- Kent County Council psychological services have provided one-to-one and group support for vulnerable students and staff prior to students' transfer to their matched schools

- all Year 7 and 8 CTS students have transferred to their new schools with effect from Easter 2014. Each of the 25 students remaining on roll in Year 9 will transfer to their new school after half term. A few students in Year 10 have also left but 134 are still on roll with Year 11, 12 and 13 students remaining to complete their examinations
- assessment and other relevant student information has been exchanged with the receiving schools to support effective transfer
- meetings have been held and arrangements have been made with other 16–19 providers matched to students' postcodes to ensure that all Year 12 students have places to complete their study programmes.

In addition to the above changes, leaders have conducted a scoping exercise to ensure that Year 10 students will be able to complete their GCSE courses successfully next year with the support of known and appropriately qualified teachers. The governing body and local authority have acted decisively to ensure that the necessary staff members are retained to deliver all students' courses for one further year. A revised senior leadership structure has also been agreed for the duration of this period.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Since the last inspection, leaders have strengthened their monitoring of teaching and focused on supporting teachers to improve their understanding and use of information on students' progress to inform the planning of their lessons. The impact of this approach was evident in the lessons I visited during this inspection, where teaching previously observed had improved, resulting in students making better progress in their learning.

Leaders' monitoring of students' achievement in relation to targets set is more systematic and effective. Well-judged use of early examination entry, coupled with good-quality additional support for targeted students, has already made its mark. Results from GCSE examinations already taken attest to a GCSE headline figure for the current Year 11 that will at least match the significant improvements secured in August 2013; leaders are justifiably confident, however, that last year's figures will be exceeded. Equally, in the sixth form, overall performance is set to improve with increased percentages of students targeted and projected to gain A\* and B grades.

Leaders have monitored the progress of Year 10 students with similar tenacity. Around a quarter of the students continuing into Year 11 have already secured good GCSE grades in English or mathematics. Students' achievement in lessons observed during this inspection points to continuing improvements. Students with whom I spoke feel that they are well supported to meet their challenging targets. Although they expressed sadness about the closure of their school, they spoke with confidence and certainty about the following year, and what they expect to achieve. Similar views were expressed by parents and carers with whom I spoke.

## **The quality of teaching**

Teaching has continued to improve since the last inspection. Conversations with parents and carers, and students, observations of the impact of teaching on learning in lessons, and the quality of marking and feedback in students' work indicate that secure progress is being made.

Leaders and teachers have responded positively to the feedback from the previous inspection in relation to improving the quality and consistency of feedback to students on how to improve their work. Much of the marking is now good. When questioned, students could confidently provide the detail of what knowledge and/or skills they still need to develop. Despite these improvements, some of the teaching observed did not provide sufficient challenge for a few students, particularly those capable of securing the highest grades. Leaders are aware of this and have appropriate plans to address this throughout the coming year.

Parents and carers with whom I spoke expressed frustration at the decision to close the school, at a time when they and their children feel teaching is beginning to improve. Nevertheless, despite initial anxieties, the same parents and carers were clear that they retain faith in the school to provide well for their child's education, precisely because of the improvements that they have already experienced.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Leaders track attendance assiduously and are fully aware of the need to improve attendance in Year 10. However, overall attendance figures for this year group are too low and still below the national figures. This is due to the persistent absence of a small minority of students. Although the school's leaders have strong links with other agencies to support better attendance for these students, strategies to date have yet to make enough of a difference.

Until Easter, attendance figures for persistent absentees in Years 7 and 8 had begun to improve as a result of the introduction of more personalised learning programmes, such as opportunities to work on certain subjects in isolation of the rest of the group, with the help of an additional adult. Similar strategies have since been initiated for a small minority of the persistent absentees in Year 10 with the expectation that these figures will now reduce. In addition, some of these students now have dual registration with the PRU which is beginning to yield success.

Without exception, students with whom I spoke expressed confidence in the leadership of the school and all staff to support them in matters to do with their well-being and safety. They and their parents and carers are aware of the implications of the closure and the fact that the school buildings, which were designed to accommodate over a thousand students, will now need to be rendered safe for 134 students and staff. Leaders have managed this process effectively,

sharing new site plans with a parent consultation group and keeping them informed throughout the process.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Since the last inspection, leaders have focused their actions relentlessly on improving teaching and achievement. Training for all staff and coaching for individuals have been well targeted and effective. Checks on students' progress indicate a strong likelihood of continued improvements in GCSE and A-level success in the forthcoming 2014 examinations. This work has continued against a backdrop of necessary consultation to close the school. The proposal to enter into consultation was particularly challenging for all staff members, because parents and carers, and some students, learned of the news ahead of them through unforeseen leaks to the local media.

While managing personal disappointment and distress, leaders and staff have worked tirelessly in the run up to Easter, so as to secure a seamless transfer for those students leaving the school. Students who are at risk of not doing so well have benefited from personalised transfer meetings supported by the coordinator for special educational needs. Throughout this period, leaders have remained focused on ensuring that teaching and achievement continues to improve without further detriment to outgoing and remaining students. This has been achieved exceptionally well. Parents and carers with whom I spoke commented favourably about the quality of communication and the readiness of leaders and staff to respond to their concerns.

Leaders remain committed to ensuring that Year 10 students receive their full entitlement to high-quality teaching and learning until such time as the school closes. Over a short period of time, they have negotiated with teachers and put together comprehensive plans to ensure that Year 10 students have continuity of teaching. Outgoing staff have been supported well. Plans are also underway to ensure that all students receive ongoing advice and guidance on their chosen pathway to the next stage of their education. Strategies to ensure the health and safety of students next year have involved local authority input. They correctly focus on all aspects including supervision and fire safety.

### **External support**

The local authority has been fully involved in supporting leaders to plan and implement the necessary changes. Officers have acknowledged, and stated publicly throughout, that the decision is not due to lack of progress in securing improvement but is financially driven. In particular, the local authority has supported governors in taking the necessary steps to secure good-quality teaching for the ongoing Year 10 students. Local authority officers will continue to monitor the school until the date of closure.