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Mr C Taylor
Headteacher
Oakmeeds Community College
Station Road
Burgess Hill
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Dear Mr Taylor

Special measures monitoring inspection of Oakmeeds Community College

Following my visit to your school on 20 May 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 college's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, vice chair of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of a local teaching school. The local authority's statement of action and the college's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

A new deputy headteacher joined the college in April 2014 following the departure of the previous deputy headteacher. The headteacher of Millais School, a nearby teaching school, has been seconded to work at the college for one day each week to support the headteacher in his drive for rapid improvement. Since the inspection two other staff members have left and two joined. Two further appointments have been made to strengthen leadership at Key Stages 3 and 4 from September 2014.

The quality of leadership and management at the college

The headteacher has acted quickly to improve leadership. He has accurately identified the main priorities for improvement and put the right actions in place to achieve them swiftly, ably supported by the new deputy headteacher and the seconded headteacher. The senior leadership team has been restructured and all leaders now have clear roles and responsibilities in making essential improvements. Senior leaders' judgements about strengths and weaknesses are more accurate and their impact on improving the quality of teaching and rate of student progress has increased. As a result, students' achievement is tracked more effectively and teachers have higher expectations of what students should achieve. Teachers' marking has improved so that students know what they have done well and what they need to do to make further progress. Teachers are using a new format to plan lessons that challenge all students. Middle leaders are receiving training to increase their impact on the quality of teaching and students' achievement.

The college has appropriate and detailed plans in place to secure rapid improvement. However, sometimes the targets in the plan lack sharpness and are not linked precisely enough to improvements in students' progress.

Governors are passionate and enthusiastic to play their role in improving the college. They are beginning to hold college leaders to account more effectively and are increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluating improvements. As a result, they are starting to ask senior leaders more challenging questions about the quality of teaching and students' progress. Governors have begun to visit the college to collect their own evidence of improvements.

The local authority has commissioned the Millais Teaching School Alliance to support the college, which is already having a positive impact. For example, specialist leaders of education are working with specific teachers and leaders, teachers receive regular training and systems to monitor improvements in the quality of teaching have improved.

While the local authority monitors the progress of the school regularly, the statement of action does not include sufficient detail about what will be evaluated, how and when, particularly in relation to improvements in students' achievement. An external review of governance took place last month. The report states that the governing body is clear about how it needs to improve but not the rate of change that is required. The local authority has not yet provided additional governors to further strengthen the governing body, which is now urgent. An external review of the use of pupil premium funding is planned for the near future.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The college's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Anders
Associate Inspector

Appointed as an Additional inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006