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Dame Mo Brennan
Acting Headteacher
Etone College
Leicester Road
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Dear Dame Brennan

Special measures monitoring inspection of Etone College

Following my visit with Laura Henshaw and Gwendoline Onyon, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 10–11 June 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 academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 23 April 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.
- The academy's action plans are fit for purpose.
- The academy may appoint newly qualified teachers, although I would recommend avoiding this in science.

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, Director of Children's Services for Warwickshire, the Academies Advisers Unit and the Education Funding Agency.

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 10–11 June 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, a range of staff, including some from Barr Beacon School, groups of students and the Chair of the interim governing body.

Context

The headteacher has resigned and left the academy at the end of April. The executive headteacher of the Matrix Trust is currently acting as headteacher. An assistant headteacher left at the end of last term and another is currently absent because of illness. Three assistant headteachers have been appointed, two from within the academy and one from Barr Beacon School. Timetables have been redesigned so two cover staff are no longer used. Two teaching assistants have left. The academy's senior leadership team continues to be augmented by senior leaders from Barr Beacon School.

Achievement of pupils at the school

In a relatively short time leaders have improved teaching so students are making better progress, particularly those eligible for pupil premium (the additional government funding for students eligible for free school meals or in local authority care). The progress students make in English has improved further because they experience teaching that is consistently at least good. The situation in mathematics is a lot better as a result of the very effective training that has taken place for teachers of this subject. All the teachers in mathematics are ensuring students progress more quickly, and more lessons were observed where students made good progress. Improvement in science is much less apparent because there has been relatively little improvement in teaching in this subject. Students were observed to be making good progress in physical education (PE) because of the effective use of assessment in this subject. In other subjects the progress students make is more variable, reflecting the variability in the quality of teaching.

Students who are supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs are making better progress because of the increase in the amount of support they receive from teaching assistants. (Leaders have rescheduled the work of teaching assistants so they provide more support.) Other students who are disabled or have special educational needs are making better progress because of the noteworthy improvements in the teaching of English and mathematics. However, their progress is at times restricted because not enough attention is being given to how teaching assistants can be effectively used in lessons. Students with low reading ages are making notably better progress because of more focused activity linked directly to closing the gap with their chronological ages. Paired reading with

sixth-formers has been a factor in this rise. Relatively little information is collected about the reading habits of more-able readers and subject leaders are not yet giving this sufficient attention.

Students eligible for the pupil premium are making much better progress because their needs are being much more carefully considered. In recognition of the slow progress being made in reducing the gap in attainment in mathematics, these students now have effective additional lessons in this subject.

In lessons students are working harder because teachers' expectations are higher, including for students in younger age groups. Students' presentation of their work has noticeably improved and they are devoting much more time to improving their work in response to the much better marking. Students' progress is strongest where the areas for improvement are derived from a careful diagnosis of the gaps in learning; for instance in mathematics much more use is being made of the analysis of the problems students encounter when undertaking assessment activities. In the lessons seen, particularly in science, learning sometimes slowed because important skills were not given sufficient attention. For instance, students often do not have the opportunity to fully consider the likely outcomes from any activities they are undertaking and there is insufficient analysis of the results. This limits achievement, particularly for the most able.

Teachers are increasingly addressing students' literacy needs in lessons. The progress being made in improving students' mathematical understanding and skills in all subjects is more limited.

The quality of teaching

The effective practice seen in a few lessons at the last visit is now becoming more widespread. Teaching in mathematics has improved very impressively since the last visit because teachers in this subject have taken full advantage of the very good support provided by Barr Beacon School. Pupils experience more lessons in which they can choose more challenging work, and they can omit more questions so they can focus more quickly on those that are challenging. Students were not seen wasting time copying, and did not report any. Teachers are asking more questions that require students to think critically about the lesson content. At times the value of this is reduced because teachers continue to accept the first right answer rather than adopting strategies that ensure all students think about important ideas. Again, inspectors did not see any examples of students critically evaluating each other's responses.

Reviews of learning are becoming a lot more effective. In English teachers are becoming adept at the timely sharing of students' writing to highlight key learning points, including through the use of 'visualiser' technology. In PE students are often used to demonstrate the skills that are being developed. This effective practice is

beginning to be seen elsewhere. For instance, in a mathematics lesson a Year 10 student was thrilled when his unique solution to calculating the area of an irregular shape was shared with the whole class. This encouraged others in the class to work harder and to be more creative in responding to the problems being posed. A further positive feature of this lesson was the link with the workplace through the requirement to estimate the cost of painting walls or laying turf in different shaped gardens.

Marking is much better and far more consistent. All books are marked and all staff are adhering to the academy's policies. All teachers are now identifying strengths and next steps in learning. There is some variability in the quality of these comments. They do not consistently identify with sufficient precision what students need to do to reach the next level. Students continue to experience some very useful opportunities to assess their own and each other's work, particularly in English and PE. This strategy is effective in these subjects because teachers have given great attention to ensuring students understand the assessment criteria. Younger students are now more likely to be provided with objectives that relate to their different abilities, reflecting the best practice seen in GCSE classes at the last visit. All staff were able to present evidence about the progress their students are making, including those eligible for the pupil premium. The better marking seen in subjects like English and mathematics is strongly informed by this information.

The academy is ensuring teaching assistants are more involved in supporting students' learning but recognises that they are not consistently used effectively by all teachers. It continues to be the case that they are unoccupied for too long in some lessons where teachers are speaking to the whole class. In the lessons where learning is less effective, particularly in science, not enough consideration is given to how work should be adapted to meet the needs of the full ability range. Lessons do not always meet the needs of more-able students and also those identified as school action, special needs. In some of the practical lessons seen in science and design and technology, students were rarely encouraged to think more deeply about the activities being undertaken, for instance by thinking about improvements that could be made at an earlier stage.

The academy is ensuring that students eligible for the pupil premium are making much better progress. Their additional lessons in mathematics are very helpful because the teaching springs from regular assessments that clearly identify the weaknesses that need to be addressed.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Leaders have taken action to ensure that attendance information is fully accurate. This reveals that attendance is below average, but the lack of accurate historical information makes it difficult to identify any trends. The academy is responding to

this through changes to its systems, including ensuring the greater accountability of leaders.

Behaviour in lessons and around the academy has improved because of higher expectations. Staff are much less tolerant of poor behaviour and more insistent that students adhere to the academy's behaviour code. This initially led to a rise in exclusions, but they are now diminishing. The new lunchtime arrangements have improved behaviour and reduced the need for supervision because students have less spare time. Students think that behaviour has improved and they report that there are fewer incidents of inappropriate behaviour in lessons.

Students reported very positively about the work the academy undertakes when dealing with bullying. They demonstrated a good awareness of different forms of bullying. The case studies provided by the academy suggested that bullying is taken seriously and any occurrences are investigated properly.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the school joined the Matrix Trust just prior to the last visit, the pace of improvement has accelerated impressively. The academy is much more effective in a number of key areas. The leadership and management of teaching are much improved, hence the reduction in weaker teaching and the increase in the amount that is good or better. Much better use is being made of lesson observations. Staff report that they are receiving much more feedback that is allowing them to improve their teaching. The follow-up to the mathematics review that was undertaken just prior to the last visit has been particularly effective. Much more consistent practice is evident in this department, including some good practice around the use of assessment information. Elsewhere underperformance is being much more effectively challenged. Leaders are ensuring adherence to the academy's policies; for instance, all staff are marking students' work in a consistent manner. Leaders have recognised that the next step is to ensure there is less variability in the effectiveness of this marking. In evaluating the effectiveness of teaching, not enough use is being made of regular short observations.

Job descriptions have been streamlined so there is greater clarity about responsibilities and lines of accountability. Teaching in English and mathematics is now much better than at the time of the inspection in April 2013. The academy development plan is now fit for purpose and indicates that leaders are much more carefully targeting their efforts. Leaders, including governors, are aware of weaknesses such as the inconsistency in the way assessment information is presented and the need to ensure this is based on highly accurate assessments. Senior leaders also recognise that the next step is to further increase the effectiveness of subject leaders so they are able to take greater responsibility for improving their departments.

Senior leaders are making some improvements to the courses offered so as to enhance achievement. Students will undertake fewer subjects but will have more to time so their achievement can be improved. Far fewer students will be involved in alternative education in the future so they can undertake more courses that are appropriate to their abilities.

The interim governing body is contributing positively to improving the academy. It has very effectively challenged senior leaders, particularly about the reliability of the information it receives about the progress the academy is making.

External support

The strong link with Barr Beacon School through the Matrix Foundation has helped accelerate improvement. There is strong evidence that this partnership is benefiting students. Staff continue to praise Barr Beacon School for the opportunities it has provided to observe outstanding practice in a wide range of areas. The presence of governors from Barr Beacon School has greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the governing body.