

Tribal
Kings Orchard
One Queen Street
Bristol
BS2 0HQ

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5307
Email: Rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com



11 September 2014

Jane Hadlow
Interim Principal
Castle Community College
Mill Road
Deal
CT14 9BD

Dear Mrs Hadlow

Special measures monitoring inspection of Castle Community College

Following my visit to your academy on 10 September 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 academy's recent section 5 inspection.

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

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim Principal, the Chair of the Governing Body and vice-chair, a representative of the local authority and the Director of Education of SchoolsCompany Limited. The proprietor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plan were evaluated. A meeting was held with the assistant Principal responsible for standards. A tour of both sites was conducted and a range of documents was reviewed including the academy's single central record of staff.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, the Principal has left the school and has been replaced by an interim Principal. The Chair of the Governing Body has resigned and been replaced. The governing body has commissioned SchoolsCompany Limited to support the academy. 17 members of staff have left the academy. 21 new staff have been recruited to improve leadership at all levels and classroom teaching. The two sites have been re-organised so that all Key Stage 3 pupils are housed on the Mill Road site with Key Stage 4 and 5 students located at Salisbury Road. One building

has been converted into the Phoenix Centre which provides additional support for a new behaviour management programme.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The interim Principal has acted quickly and effectively since her appointment. She is ambitious for the academy and its students. She has worked hard to ensure that all staff, parents and students understand fully her vision and increased expectations. In particular, she has raised leaders' expectations about the quality of teaching, standards of behaviour and uniform. Also, the installation of a robust site security system, enhanced measures for safeguarding students, clearer guidelines for teachers about assessment, marking and feedback and the implementation of a robust system of sanctions and rewards are all signs of her swift actions. Early evidence suggests that these, among other initiatives, are contributing to necessary improvements being made.

Senior leaders have acted similarly effectively to create better systems for monitoring both teaching and behaviour robustly and rigorously. As a result, behaviour in lessons and around the sites has improved and leaders report that the quality of teaching has also improved rapidly. The impact of this is seen in the orderly movement of students between lessons, sensible conduct at break times, their timely settling into learning and the decreasing frequency of low-level disruption in lessons. The academy's system for tracking and monitoring students' achievement has been overhauled to enable better analysis by leaders and teachers. Leaders now have easier access to information about each student's progress and targets. Recently they have begun to share this with teachers so that they plan learning which better meets the needs of students. Consequently, students' achievement is beginning to rise. This has been further aided by the provision of extra support, like the 'Saturday school' which was attended by students during the examination season.

The interim Principal has rightly re-organised the roles and responsibilities of both senior and middle leaders to increase their accountability. New leadership appointments have been made in English, mathematics and science which have strengthened the teams in these core subjects. All staff have been given opportunities for appropriate training, aligned to the areas for improvement identified at the inspection. For example, all teachers have been trained to follow a protocol for the beginning of lessons which means that no time is wasted.

Necessary changes to the governing body have occurred since the inspection with a new chair now in place. The number of committees has been rightly been reduced to two in response to the external review of governance that took place in June 2014. This has meant that lines of accountability are clearer and time is used more efficiently. Governors now receive useful and detailed information about the

academy and its performance. They are working closely with the interim Principal on the priority areas and are involved in monitoring the improvements including those relating to progress and achievement. Individual governors have been given aspects of the statement of action and improvement plans to oversee and evaluate. The Chair of the Governing Body holds a weekly meeting with the interim Principal to check progress and identify where further challenge and support are required. Governors acknowledge the need to evaluate in greater detail the effectiveness of the academy's use of pupil premium funding. The governors are actively seeking sponsorship for Castle Community College. Further delay in resolving this issue could jeopardise the growing stability in the academy and the increasing confidence of its parents.

Both the governors and the extensive range of external advisors and consultants have supported the senior leaders in the development of the statement of action and improvement plans. These plans match the areas for improvement reported in the inspection. It is not always clear enough how success will be measured or evaluated.

Leaders are making very good use of the extensive and effective support offered by SchoolsCompany Limited, especially to improve leadership. The local authority has responded quickly to the governors' and interim Principal's deliberate effort to work more closely in partnership. Its officers are providing additional support for the academy and this is also helping to improving leadership at all levels. The governing body has engaged SchoolsCompany Limited to support the academy until 31 August 2016. The academy is, therefore, drawing on extensive resources as it addresses the areas for improvement from the inspection and builds its own internal leadership capacity.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The proprietor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint NQTs.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector