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Dame Mo Brennan
Etone College
Leicester Road
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Dear Dame Mo Brennan

Special measures monitoring inspection of Etone College

Following my visit with Elizabeth Needham and Robin Fugill, Additional Inspectors, to your academy on 17–18 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place 23–24 April 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 academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

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

Yours sincerely

Gwendoline Coates
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 fourth monitoring inspection on 17–18 September 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, a range of staff, including substantive and seconded senior and middle leaders, groups of students and the Chair and another member of the Governing Body.

Context

Significant changes to staffing have taken place since the previous monitoring visit. The executive headteacher of the Matrix Trust continues as acting headteacher. Two associate headteachers from Barr Beacon School support her in this role. A substantive assistant headteacher from Etone College is currently on maternity leave and another has stepped down from the leadership role. Four acting assistant headteachers have been appointed from within the academy. Two assistant headteachers from Barr Beacon School have been seconded full-time for one year to support the leadership team and two others have been seconded for one day a week to provide further expertise. Two substantive teachers from Etone College are now acting Heads of House and another is now Head of English. Eighteen teachers left the academy in August 2014 and 10 new teachers took up positions at the beginning of September, some of who were newly qualified teachers. The business manager left the school, together with a number of support staff, including six teaching assistants.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

Achievement is improving because strategies introduced since May 2014 to improve teaching and the monitoring of students' progress are beginning to have an impact. Students are now more focused and are learning at a faster pace. Their aspirations have been raised.

In summer 2014, the percentage of students gaining grade C or above in GCSE English was 72%, and the percentage gaining grade C or above in GCSE mathematics was 73%. However, the percentage of students' gaining at least five GCSEs including English and mathematics at grades C or above was 57%. This discrepancy suggests previous weaknesses in systems to monitor and promote students' progress and attainment across all subjects.

At Key Stage 4, achievement across subjects is still too variable. For example, it is still weak in design and technology (food and graphics options), in modern foreign languages, and in core science and additional science options. In design and technology, leadership at subject level is not yet strong enough to have a positive impact on the progress students are making. In modern foreign languages, the quality of teaching is not good enough to ensure that students make sufficient progress in their learning. In the case of science, the new head of department, a

seconded assistant headteacher from Barr Beacon School who took up post at the beginning of September 2014, is making appropriate changes quickly and confidently. Physical education, the humanities subjects, the three separate sciences and English literature, continue to be strong subjects in which students achieve well.

Narrowing the gaps in achievement between different groups of students is a priority for the leadership team. The summer results indicate that the achievement of disadvantaged Year 11 students was low compared to their classmates. However, gaps in achievement for current Year 11 students and for those in Years 7 to 10 are much narrower as a result of more focused support directed at these groups of students. Despite this, gaps are still too wide. There are also still wide gaps in the attainment of disabled students and those who have special educational needs compared to other students, although expected progress in English for this group is better than for students without special educational needs. Expected progress in English is better than in mathematics for all groups of students.

Strategies have been introduced to improve students' reading, writing and presentation skills, and their mathematical understanding across all subjects. However, the impact of these strategies is only just beginning to be apparent.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching overall is improving and Key Stage 4 students, in particular, comment on the positive changes that have taken place in teaching since May 2014. Teachers now have high expectations of all students and of their own performance in the classroom. The improving use of student performance data is helping teachers to target the specific learning needs of individual students and groups of students more effectively. For example, in mathematics, teachers are increasingly able to adapt and improve their teaching in response to feedback. However, the quality of teaching is still too variable and not yet effective enough to have a significantly positive impact on students' learning and progress.

Although there is still inconsistency in the quality of teachers' assessment, it is much improved because effective systems have been introduced to ensure that accuracy in assessment is routine academy practice. Improvements have been made to the quality of marking and this is enabling students to understand better how to improve their work. However, there is still variability in practice and therefore in impact. Students have been informed about their new baseline targets. At this early stage in the term, students know their targets but do not fully understand them. Despite this, it is clear that students recognise how this information will help them to achieve well.

Teachers use a range of activities to promote learning. In general, they demonstrate improved questioning, which is encouraging students to think more deeply and to develop higher order skills. In science, for example, as a result of the teacher's questions, a student was able to clarify the function of the heart by likening it to the movement of an 'ice pop' when hand pressure is applied. In a well-managed

personal, social and health education lesson on the topic of gangs and knife crime, the teacher's good use of questioning skilfully built upon students' existing knowledge to enable them to explore thought-provoking issues and to share their opinions and ideas. However, there is still room for further improvement in this area to ensure all teachers stretch and challenge every student and thus improve the progress being made by all.

There is still more to be done to develop the work of teaching assistants. They support students well but need to provide more challenge by helping students to solve problems themselves rather than giving them the answers.

Sixth form students are confident and articulate. They feel well supported by their teachers and say that the provision they receive meets their needs.

Most students are keen to work hard and do well. However, sometimes the quality of teaching is such that students fail to learn well and do not make sufficient progress. This was the case when, for example, teaching was not sufficiently well paced, when seating arrangements were not planned properly, or when teachers moved on to new topics without ensuring that students had fully understood the last topic. In such situations, students struggled to maintain their concentration and either become quietly inattentive or engaged in low-level disruptive behaviour.

Behaviour and safety of students

Students have generally positive attitudes towards learning and are keen to complete tasks and to work productively. Their conduct outside of lessons is generally polite and well mannered. They are respectful to adults and to each other. A new, formal school uniform was introduced at the beginning of this term. Students welcome this and say how smart and how proud they feel wearing it, both in school and when travelling to and from school. It is evident that new uniform is giving students a sense of pride in their school community.

Low-level disruption has been reduced significantly as a result of a far more effective behaviour management strategy that is easy for students to understand and is being applied more consistently by teachers. However, students say that, although behaviour in lessons is improving, there is still some variability across both subjects and teachers. Changes to lunchtime arrangements have resulted in a much calmer lunchtime, where far fewer incidents of misbehaviour arise. Despite these improvements, more thought needs to be given to how students are dismissed from the café and dining hall at the end of lunchtimes to prevent unnecessary crowding in the narrow corridors.

The academy is now compiling, monitoring and analysing data about behaviour more effectively. The number of exclusions has reduced significantly because of changes to the academy's approach to behaviour management. This is due to the clearer focus on, and greater support for, the needs of particular groups of students, including disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or who have special

educational needs. Attendance and punctuality are improving and persistent absence is falling. It is too early to evaluate the full impact of these new strategies; in particular, because past attendance data was found to be unreliable. However, early signs are encouraging.

Students say they feel safe at the academy and all safeguarding requirements are fully met. Incidents of bullying have reduced substantially, although young students suggest that there are a few students who are 'mean' in corridors. The academy is aware of this and is addressing the issue.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

Since May 2014, leaders have demonstrated a proactive, highly strategic and urgent approach to tackling the improvements needed in the academy. It is too early to see the full impact of their actions, but the initial evidence is positive.

Senior leaders are addressing the need to improve the quality of teaching as a matter of urgency. They have put in place a rigorous framework of professional development and monitoring to improve teachers' performance and raise standards in the classroom. Although systems are at an early stage, the academy can already show some evidence of improvement among individual teachers.

All staff now have clear roles and responsibilities linked to improving students' achievement and well-being. Middle leaders' responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and students' progress are clear, and most feel very positive about this challenge. For example, the quality of leadership and teaching in mathematics is improving and is beginning to have an impact on the progress of current students. Regular timetabled monitoring and evaluation activities are now in place so that all subject areas take a consistent and timely approach to checking students' progress and teachers' performance. Despite these improvements, there is still variability in the quality of middle leadership.

The use of data is better because systems have been simplified and streamlined to ensure consistency across subjects and key stages. As a result, teachers are now able to plan more effectively to meet the specific learning needs of individual students and groups of students in their classes and to accelerate the progress students are able to make.

There is now a much stronger focus on disadvantaged students in terms of both their attendance and their achievement. However, this is very recent because previously this group was not being identified and thus targeted support was not provided. As a result, trends in the gaps between attendance and achievement of this group and other students are not yet being reversed to any significant degree. Strong focus is also being given to narrowing gaps in the achievement of other groups, including between girls and boys and between disabled students and those who have special educational needs and other students.

Succession planning is well organised to anticipate the future changes that will eventually occur in relation to leadership of the school. The approach is highly strategic. The current temporary (acting and seconded) positions provide the academy with an opportunity for leadership to be stabilised and for support to be provided for less-experienced leaders.

The school is suffering from a declining roll as a consequence of its current situation. The decline is more pronounced in the sixth form and, at the moment, too few students in Year 11 progress to the sixth form. School leaders and the governing body are very aware of these issues and recognise them as a priority to reverse.

In order to raise achievement, changes have been made to the curriculum at Key Stage 4: students now study fewer subjects but have more time for each subject, a range of vocational subjects is offered, and the number of students studying off-site has been reduced. A range of strategies have been introduced to improve literacy, including a new 'marking for literacy' policy and directed reading during form time. However, it is not yet clear that sufficiently focused support is extended to all students whose reading ages are below their chronological ages. The curriculum as a whole, and the personal, social and health education programme in particular, promotes British values, tolerance and mutual respect for others, their faiths and customs. In the sixth form, a wide range of subjects is offered, although in some subjects, numbers are very small.

The reformed governing body is a strength of the school. The Chair and members are rigorous in holding leaders to account, are knowledgeable about school data, the school's strengths and weaknesses and are keen to encourage and support its improvement. For some, including the Chair, their experience as members of the governing body of Barr Beacon, an outstanding school, ensures that their expectations are high about what can be achieved by students, teachers, support staff and leaders.

External support

The main source of external support is that provided by the headteacher, staff and governing body of Barr Beacon, an outstanding teaching school - the other member of the Matrix Trust, the sponsoring academy. This support is extensive and highly effective in terms of leadership at all levels, the provision of training and professional development, and the modelling of good practice. This is not a one-way process, and good practice in the physical education provision at Etone College is being shared with Barr Beacon School.