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9 October 2014

Mrs M Veale
The Interim Principal
The Grange School and Sports College
Tower Road North
Bristol
BS30 8XQ

Dear Mrs Veale

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Grange School and Sports College

Following my visit with Joseph Skivington, Additional Inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 October 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in 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 school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs) subject to my approval of the plans to support NQTs during their induction year.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for South Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2013

- Take action to eliminate inadequate teaching and increase the proportion that is good across all year groups, including the sixth form, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - insist on high standards of behaviour at all times
 - expect the very best work from all students
 - ensure work set in lessons matches students' different capabilities and that all are fully involved in the tasks
 - improve the way they use questioning in lessons to check students' understanding and involve them more in their own learning
 - improve feedback to students so that they know how to improve their work and that they check that students act upon the teachers' suggestions.
- Raise achievement, especially in mathematics, science and the humanities subjects and narrow the gap in achievement between those supported by the pupil premium and other students, by:
 - closely checking students' performance to identify any underachievement
 - rapidly giving support to those students who are in danger of underachieving
 - improving the support provided to disabled students and those who have special educational needs, both in class and when students are withdrawn for extra help.
- Strengthen the way in which all leaders improve teaching and ensure good achievement, including in the sixth form, by:
 - checking regularly that teaching is good enough and accurately identifying where improvements are needed
 - providing effective guidance and support to teachers, including the chance to see the best teachers teaching
 - checking that teachers follow up advice and instructions given after lesson observations and act on these successfully so that students' achievement improves
 - holding teachers in all subjects strongly to account for the quality of their teaching and assessment and how well students achieve.
- Increase the effectiveness of the governing body in holding the school to account by:
 - ensuring that governors are more active in monitoring the school's performance and that they check regularly that agreed actions are proving effective in improving the quality of teaching and closing the gaps in achievement
 - commissioning an external review of governance in order to assess how else this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 October 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim principal, other school leaders, a group of Year 7 students, a representative from The Cabot Learning Federation and the local authority. Inspectors observed 23 episodes of teaching. All of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.

Context

A consultation has recently commenced on proposals for the school to close. The outcome of this consultation will not be known until March 2015. A significant number of staff left the school in August 2014; only nine students joined the school in Year 7 and no students have joined in Year 12. A new interim principal took up post from September 2014. A restructuring has taken place of all leaders' roles and responsibilities.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The 2014 GCSE examination results were disappointing in many areas, including English and mathematics. Teachers' predictions of students' likely GCSE outcomes were inaccurate. As a result, the interim principal has implemented practice examinations in English and mathematics for all Year 11 students. These examinations are being marked by teachers within The Cabot Learning Federation to ensure that the school has a very clear understanding of each student's current GCSE performance in English and mathematics and the areas students need to develop further. I will scrutinise the outcomes of these examinations, and the impact of any extra support the school is providing for students, during my next visit. English teachers at the school have been involved in marking other schools' practice examinations and this is deepening their understanding of the assessment criteria at GCSE level.

Students are currently making much better progress due to the improved quality of teaching. Work in students' books indicates that, in most subjects, the students are achieving well. Students are able to explain clearly what they are learning. Some students, however, find it difficult to express themselves equally well in writing. The school is aware of this and is implementing initiatives to develop students' writing skills. For example, in humanities, students are completing one extended piece of writing each month. Teachers are using this writing to identify students' strengths and to also ensure students receive appropriate and timely extra support to tackle weaknesses.

The quality of teaching

Leaders have raised expectations of the quality of teaching and it is improving as a result. Positive working relationships exist between teachers and students which allow lessons to proceed at a good pace, maximising learning time.

Teachers create a high quality learning environment where students are confident to offer their thoughts and opinions on key learning points. Students work well on their own, with their peers and in groups. Most teachers use effective questioning to assess students' learning and to probe and deepen their understanding. Learning support assistants know the students they are supporting well and provide effective help for them.

A new marking policy is giving students better opportunities to respond to their teachers' feedback and to demonstrate their understanding of how to improve their work. This policy is being followed consistently across the school. Students say that this feedback is giving them a clearer understanding of how they can improve their work; inspectors agree with this.

Some teachers are not using information on students' achievement well enough to plan learning activities to ensure students make good progress. More-able students are not always sufficiently challenged and the less able do not always receive enough support when writing. I will look at this aspect of the school's work again during my next visit to ensure that it has improved.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students are typically polite and courteous around the school and in lessons. Students understand the expectations and procedures associated with the new behaviour policy and they say that this is helping behaviour to improve. The proportion of students who have received a fixed-term exclusion at the school has reduced significantly.

Students in Year 7 receive their teaching in Year 8 classes. They say that the older students are helpful and they feel safe; they feel motivated by being able to complete some Year 8 work.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders at the school are positive about the good start students and teachers have made to the school year; they are determined to maintain improvements. Expectations are high and leaders effectively monitor the quality of teaching through a range of activities including formal observations, short visits to lessons and scrutiny of students' work. Targets that are set for teachers are challenging; they ensure that students are expected to make at least good progress.

During joint observations with inspectors, leaders' judgements of what constitutes effective teaching and areas to improve teaching further were found to be accurate. The school understands each of its teachers' individual strengths and developmental needs; a range of effective training activities is provided for teachers to improve further.

Leaders are utilising links across The Cabot Learning Federation to share ideas and to observe best practice. This is enabling those new to leadership to provide effective monitoring and evaluation of their departments and faculties.

Governors have a much clearer understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of further development. They have received helpful training from the local authority to enable them to scrutinise information on students' achievement; they are providing more rigorous challenge to senior leaders to maintain the rate of improvement.

External support

The Cabot Learning Federation is continuing to provide highly effective support to the school. All teachers have been part of the federation's regular meetings; staff are able to share and learn from the most effective practice.

The local authority has provided a school improvement partner who has conducted an initial visit to the school. He has arranged a series of visits to provide an external evaluation of the school's rate of improvement and to work alongside leaders on key improvement priorities. The governing body has undertaken good-quality training through the local authority to deepen its understanding of information on students' achievement.