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Ms Liz King
The Headteacher
Chaucer Technology School
Spring Lane
Canterbury
CT1 1SU

Dear Ms King

Special measures monitoring inspection of Chaucer Technology School

Following my visit to your school on 6 November 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 March 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.

Leaders may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 Kent and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Farmer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - developing better assessment procedures, including better marking and feedback to students so that they understand how to improve their work
 - challenging students more in lessons to engage their attention and accelerate their progress
 - ensuring teachers regularly check students' progress and make changes to their teaching if necessary
 - planning lessons which make it clear what students are expected to learn and which meet their different learning needs
 - ensuring teachers fully implement the school's behaviour policy
 - further improving attendance to maintain continuity in students' learning
 - ensuring the school's literacy policy is more rigorously implemented.
- Improve rates of progress, particularly in English, mathematics, science, Modern foreign languages and history by:
 - ensuring teachers use performance data more effectively to inform their planning
 - building on the recent improvements in English and mathematics to make sure that students learn well in all subjects
 - developing students' literacy skills across different subjects.
- Improve rates of attendance, and reduce the number of students who are persistently absent.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - changing the staffing structure so that it provides for greater accountability for the quality of teaching and learning and students' behaviour
 - ensuring there are regular and rigorous checks on the implementation of school policies.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 6 November 2014

Evidence

This inspection has focused on the achievement, teaching, behaviour and safety of Year 11, the last remaining cohort in the school. It has also looked at leaders' work to maintain student and parental confidence in their ability to effectively discharge their responsibilities until such time as the school finally closes in the summer term of 2015.

During this inspection, I met with you, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Executive Principal, the deputy headteacher, the heads of mathematics, science and English, a group of students and the lead teacher for teaching and learning. I also observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and observed four lessons, two of which jointly with a member of the senior team. You escorted me on a tour of the school, enabling me to see other aspects of teaching and the arrangements for keeping the buildings safe for students and staff. I joined you and other staff for lunch with the student body and I spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. I also spoke with several parents by telephone and scrutinised governing body minutes.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit which took place in May 2014, Years 9, 11, 12 and 13 have left the school. Only Year 11 now remains.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Staff and students returned in September to the publication of the school's un-validated GCSE results. These reflect sustained improvements, with just over half of the 2014 Year 11 cohort securing five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. Improvements in sixth form outcomes secured in 2013 were also sustained. In particular, the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and that of their peers significantly narrowed in 2014.

Leaders continue to focus on supporting teachers to improve their understanding and use of students' assessment data to inform the planning of their lessons. The impact of this approach was clear to see during this inspection. Discussions with students, work seen and students' current assessment data attest to teaching that enables students to make good, and in some instances outstanding, progress in their learning.

Leaders and teachers monitor students' achievement in relation to targets set routinely. Their insistence is noticed by students and parents. Parents with whom I spoke felt that the unique situation in which the school now operates is very much to the students' benefit. In particular, they praised the effectiveness of the support and challenge provided to ensure that no student falls behind. Students commented on

how well teachers and leaders know them and now ensure that if they need extra support it is immediate with no time lost or wasted. Leaders have prioritised the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills to good effect. Progress rates in English and mathematics for the current Year 11 cohort are far better than in previous years. Levels of confidence are high and all staff, including parents and students, are confident that the school's next and last set of GCSE results will yield further improvement. The accuracy of leaders' previous predictions, set alongside the quality of work seen during this visit, suggest that the journey of improvement is likely to continue.

The quality of teaching

Teaching has considerably improved since the last inspection. Conversations with parents and students, work scrutinised and learning observed over time indicate that students are now benefiting from teaching that is helping them to make much better progress than in the past. This is also true of students' vulnerable to underachievement, such as disadvantaged students or those with special educational needs. Several parents remarked on how much more positive their children are about the school. Comments, such as, 'there is no poor teaching anymore', or, 'in the past, he or she would moan about temporary teachers or teachers that couldn't explain things properly, but not any longer' were in abundance. All parties attest to significant improvements in teaching which properly inspire confidence.

Leaders and teachers have taken on board the points for improvement concerning marking and feedback and the need to provide greater challenge to the most-able students. Work scrutinised provided testimony to the quality of teachers' feedback on students' written work. However, there is still more to be done to ensure that students' responses to teachers' comments are meaningful and take them forward in their learning.

Students with whom I spoke were adamant that teaching has improved significantly. One student advised, 'There is no hiding place this year. There are so few of us left now and teachers know us inside out. If we don't complete homework or work hard enough, they are on to us and we can't get away with it.'

Parents with whom I spoke still expressed frustration at the decision to close the school. However, they were pleased to convey their renewed confidence in the quality of teaching. In particular, they feel that behaviour in lessons is far better because teaching is more engaging and motivating. Students with whom I spoke endorsed their parents' views. During this inspection, students' engagement with their learning was impressive and much stronger than in the past.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Leaders track attendance carefully and, as a result of their interventions, attendance in Year 11 has improved. In particular, the persistent absence of a small minority of students has significantly reduced. Despite this, overall attendance figures for the

year group are too low and still below the national figures. Leaders maintain strong links with other agencies to support better attendance for these students and work strategically together to bring about improvements.

Without exception, students with whom I spoke expressed confidence in leaders and teachers to support them in matters to do with their well-being and safety. They recognise the considerable amount of energy and effort that has been put into rendering the buildings safe for such a reduced community of adults and students. Although a few students expressed minor irritation with having to walk further to get to certain points of the building, they are clear about the reasons why.

All students with whom I spoke feel safe at school and free from any kind of bullying. Parents with whom I spoke agree. In contrast to the same period the previous year, there have been virtually no incidents of exclusion since Easter; teachers and students alike say that behaviour is much improved. During this inspection, students' conduct in lessons and around the site was good. In particular, behaviour at lunchtime, when all students and staff take lunch together, was exemplary. Leaders continue to keep parents informed of the ongoing process of risk assessment through a parent focus group that meets on a monthly basis.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders continue to focus correctly on improving the quality of teaching and achievement for Chaucer students. Plans put together in the summer term, to ensure that Year 11 students would receive continuity of teaching, have been exceptionally well executed. Despite a full and challenging agenda, including the need to ensure a smooth transfer of other students to their new schools before the end of the summer term, leaders have succeeded in maintaining the full confidence of students, staff and the parent body. Parents, with whom I spoke, unequivocally expressed confidence in leaders. They also expressed fulsome appreciation of teachers' commitment to their child's last year at the school.

Leaders' dynamic, but equally sensitive, approach has ensured that teachers accept their accountability for the outcomes of students and are determined to secure improvements for them. To this end they have embraced the leaders' improvement agenda and have engaged fully with training and performance management targets, including safeguarding and child protection training which was delivered early in September. Teachers' commitment is personal, borne of a desire to deliver the very best for the remaining students who have been destabilised by the imminent closure of their school, something which they and their parents recognise and greatly appreciate. Students welcome the extra challenge provided by staff and respond positively to opportunities for extra lessons after school and during the breaks.

Governors have ensured that plans are well focused, updated regularly and properly evaluated. In particular, plans relating to rendering the site safe for its current intake of students and staff have been achieved within timescale. These have been signed off by the local authority health and safety executive. Leaders check students'

achievement, attendance and behaviour regularly. External verification of teachers' assessment has been led by the Swale Academies Trust and a recent review of teaching during October 2014, conducted by Swale personnel, signalled improvements in teaching, achievement and behaviour compared with the previous review which took place during the spring term. Joint observations conducted during this inspection were accurate.

Leaders have also initiated a carefully designed programme to ensure that all students receive on-going advice and guidance to help them to decide on their chosen pathway to the next stage of their education. The programme was successfully launched in October with a sixth form destinations evening and was well received by parents and students alike. Leaders are now putting together final plans to support students after the publication of their GCSE examinations, thereby ensuring that their needs will not be forgotten during the transition from pre-16 to post-16 education.

External support

The local authority has been fully involved in supporting leaders to implement the necessary changes. In particular, the local authority has supported governors in taking the necessary steps to secure good quality teaching for the current Year 11 students. They have funded the necessary health and safety changes and have ensured that lunchtime provision is available for students and staff, and to a high enough standard. Financial support and monitoring will continue until the date of closure.