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Catherine O'Driscoll
Kingsbury School and Sports College
Kingsbury Road
Erdington
Birmingham
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Dear Ms O'Driscoll

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kingsbury School and Sports College

Following my visit with Additional Inspectors, Suha Ahmad and Stephen Daniels, to your school on 9–10 December 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 school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 2014. 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 not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham and as below.

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2014

- Make teaching at least consistently good, in all subjects, by ensuring that teachers:
 - set stimulating work in lessons at the right level of difficulty to engage students
 - frequently check the progress made by students during lessons and amend activities when needed to ensure a good pace of learning is maintained
 - mark books regularly, ensuring that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to reach and exceed their targets, and have time to respond to the advice given.
- Raise achievement, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that the work set challenges students of all ability levels to aim higher
 - improving the support for pupils eligible for the pupil premium
 - ensuring that disabled students and those who have special educational needs have the right resources and are set appropriate work.
- Eliminate low-level disruption and poor behaviour in lessons and around the school, by ensuring that staff are consistent in the way they use strategies to manage behaviour.
- Ensure the range of subjects and courses offered matches the needs and interests of all students, by ensuring that:
 - sufficient attention is given to creative subjects
 - the courses students study on other sites are properly monitored
 - checks are made on how pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is provided.
- Raise attendance rates by promoting the importance of regular attendance to students and their parents and carers.
- Improve subject leadership where it has weaknesses, and ensure assessment data are accurate across all subjects.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 9–10 December 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, middle leaders, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and the executive headteacher of the preferred academy sponsor.

Context

Since my last visit, there has been considerable staff turnover: 22 staff have left the school, 14 new staff have been appointed and eight teaching vacancies remain. The restructure of the senior leadership team has been agreed and has been in force since the end of October. The school is currently planning for a further restructure of staff at other levels. A preferred academy sponsor has been agreed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

In 2014, the achievement of students fell further from an already low base. This was unexpected, as the school's systems for monitoring students' progress suggested a similar outcome to that of 2013. Despite analysis of these outcomes, there is little real explanation for the significant drop in standards other than inaccuracy of assessment. You and your leaders have also come to the conclusion that this year group suffered most from weak teaching over time and the upheaval in the school over recent years.

Of particular concern is the increase in the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students and others in English. This is set against a backdrop of poorer achievement for all. Given the recognised issue with low levels of literacy in the school, this is a matter for urgent action. There is a more positive picture for disadvantaged students in mathematics, where achievement has improved slightly and the gap in attainment, although still significant, has closed by eight percentage points. However, in both English and mathematics, it remains the case that the most students, including the most able, are not achieving what they should.

In response to the considerable difference between teacher assessment and actual outcomes, you have secured training and support from external partners for moderation of assessment in English and mathematics this year. The first collection of progress information earlier this term suggests that assessment is becoming more secure as a result, but this will need to be monitored very carefully throughout the year. Inspectors also noted that current achievement remains considerably adrift from the targets set for this academic year.

Following the 2014 results, you and your leaders rapidly reviewed and refined the tracking and monitoring system with the aim of identifying underperformance more quickly and accurately. Progress is being monitored rigorously across subjects, years groups and class teachers, so that you are more able to pinpoint where problems are arising. This information is being used more effectively because it is shared with subject leaders, with expectations of rapid action and accountability for outcomes. Nonetheless, its effectiveness is as yet unproven and relies heavily on the school securing sustained improvement in the accuracy of teachers' assessment of progress.

The monitoring described above is informing interventions that are much more focused on where students need to be and what needs to be done to ensure appropriate progress. There is some early evidence that progress for the current Year 11 is better than that for previous years. However, although the school is now developing systems for intervening far earlier in future, this is not yet routinely the case. Consequently, there remains far too much 'fire fighting' at Year 11. Thus, while progress may be improving for this year group, not enough is yet being done to improve progress for all students in all year groups in order to build and sustain a strong base for achievement for all.

Where positive action has been taken across the school, there is evidence of impact on students' attitudes and aspirations. For instance, the use of 'flight paths' is now apparent in all subjects. Where these are referred to by teachers as part of their lessons and in conjunction with marking and feedback, students are very positive about them. They find this approach motivating, and even those who profess to be blasé about them are clear that they have to aim to be at least in line with, if not above, their flight line. The school has taken the decision to base flight paths on four levels of progress by the end of Year 11 and this is beginning to contribute to raising aspirations of the less able so that their targets are not demotivatingly low.

The very new 'skills school' approach to earlier intervention for those students who start at the school with attainment below Level 4 in English or mathematics is showing early promise, particularly in improving reading. However, it is not yet the case that students are routinely supported by subject teachers to apply the gains achieved in their lessons, for instance in English.

The quality of teaching

There has been some improvement in teaching since the last monitoring visit but this remains inconsistent around the school. Moreover, the very high rates of teacher absence in the school and the number of unfilled vacancies are having a detrimental effect on leaders' ability to increase the pace of improvement. Students made it very clear to inspectors that they resented the stream of temporary teachers and the poor quality of teaching they felt was frequently their lot. Inspectors noted that, although there is some good and even outstanding teaching in the school, too often

planning fails to take into account the prior attainment of students, so that activities are not well matched to abilities, knowledge and understanding. There is a lack of challenge for the most able in many lessons and, too frequently, less-able students are left to struggle with tasks that are beyond their grasp.

Where teachers use questioning well – for instance, in history, religious studies and textiles – students are engaged with their learning and participating fully. However, where this is not the case, students become bored and distracted and low-level disruption is frequently the outcome. Students say that, in some lessons, it is difficult to learn as a result.

The quality of marking remains inconsistent across the school. Examples were seen of regular, helpful advice and guidance. In these cases, students knew exactly what to do to improve. This was particularly noted in physics books. Nevertheless, too often, books were left unmarked for several weeks and comments made were cursory and limited to corrections, with little or no guidance to help students understand their next steps in learning.

While a substantial proportion of poorer teaching occurs in lessons where the permanent teachers are absent, this is not always the case. Students are very clear about where they will experience good teaching and where they will not. They say they are cross and fed up when they arrive at a lesson to find another temporary teacher who does not know them or where they are up to in their learning, particularly where this leads to then being asked to complete tasks they have already done before, sometimes several times. They pointed out to inspectors, that while school leaders are constantly 'preaching' about the importance of their attendance, teachers are regularly absent themselves and they recognise that this is having a negative impact on their learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

You and your leaders are very aware that the improvements in behaviour achieved last term have not been sustained. There are a range of reasons for this, including the level of staff absence and unfilled vacancies noted above. This is compounded because there has been a clear decline in the consistency with which teachers and other staff apply the school's behaviour policy.

Student behaviour around the school at break and lunchtime is typically loud and boisterous, with a lot of pushing and shoving. This behaviour often makes it difficult for students to settle to the calm, ordered environment required for effective learning in lessons. In discussions with inspectors in corridors and on the playground, a significant minority of students presented very negative attitudes about the school, complaining that the staff did not value them and that the quality of teaching in many lessons was poor. They said, and inspectors agreed, that behaviour was worse in these lessons and that they were often prevented from learning. Other groups of pupils spoken to during the inspection expressed the view

that behaviour was improving and that it was the poor behaviour of some pupils who could not exercise self-discipline and take responsibility for their own behaviour that was undermining the school's efforts to raise standards of behaviour.

Currently, you are undertaking a review of the behaviour policy to identify where this can be strengthened and simplified so that both permanent and temporary staff are better supported in its effective use. Increased monitoring is also in place and a decision has been made to use internal and fixed-term exclusion to respond to the more serious instances of student misbehaviour. Consequently, these have risen this term following a reduction in the spring and summer terms last year. A recent and timely local authority review of behaviour has confirmed that this is an aspect that needs rapid attention if the school is to move more quickly towards removal of special measures. You are now working with them and other external partners to respond to the recommendations made.

The school's recently developed Learning Zone provision is aimed at addressing students' behaviour difficulties. Their needs are assessed on entry to the centre and students are then supported through carefully targeted intervention programmes, the impact of which is tracked and evaluated. At 70%, outcomes, in terms of pupils returning successfully to mainstream classes, are encouraging and a useful element of the school's behaviour for learning strategy that is beginning to bear fruit.

Students are very tolerant of differences and bullying on this basis is rare. This is because staff make sure that there are opportunities for students to learn about and discuss different views, values, cultures and opinions. The recent focus on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clearly beginning to have an impact. Inspectors saw good examples around the school of how this is promoted, including through assemblies and form time. However, students say that there are some groups who are intimidating and who they avoid, although the vast majority say that they feel safe in school.

The focus on attendance through the house system has had a positive effect so that, at this point in the term, attendance is above the national average.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Progress has been made in several key areas of leadership. Self-evaluation is accurate overall. Although judgements about teaching have been overgenerous, this is because there has previously been too much emphasis placed on individual lesson judgements, which has led to a better picture than is the case when teaching over time is judged as a whole. You have recognised this and clarified the way in which judgements are now being made across all aspects of teaching over time. Accordingly, monitoring of teaching is much more robust because it is supported by a regular and well-structured system to track and evaluate. Middle leaders are now involved in this process.

As noted above, the level of staff absence alongside unfilled vacancies is having a detrimental effect on the rapid improvement of teaching, which you agree is a top priority for the school. With help and advice from the local authority's Human Resources staff, you have established systems for monitoring and addressing absence. This is appreciated by those staff whose attendance is good but who have carried increasing workloads to cover for absent colleagues. Indeed, inspectors noted the efforts of senior leaders to listen to the views and opinions of staff, particularly in working with them to raise morale and create a greater sense of team working to improve outcomes for students.

You and your senior leaders have established and implemented clear processes and procedures to secure better understanding of roles and responsibility at middle leader level, substantially increasing accountability for this group. They now know exactly how they are held accountable for both students' achievement and the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility, and also how they are expected to hold their subject staff to account. Training and support have been provided so that they understand how to use the systems that have been established. Work remains to be done to embed the new ways of working and to monitor the impact on students' progress.

Performance management systems are now effective. Targets are linked to the achievement of particular groups as well as to the *Teachers' Standards* and responsibility payments. Those who do not meet their targets do not move up the pay scale. Although the school still has a legacy of underperformance amongst upper pay scale teachers, this is dealt with more effectively now because of the more rigorous tracking. However, this is yet to secure consistently good teaching.

Governors have developed a more challenging approach which can now be evidenced more clearly through minutes of governing body meetings and the reports from the monthly Monitoring Task Force; for instance, the extraordinary meeting called following the 2014 examination results, where leaders were clearly challenged. Governors know the school and where key weaknesses remain. However, they are less clear about the next steps needed to address some of the more serious issues.

External support

The local authority continues to monitor the school's progress regularly through Monitoring Task Force meetings, which the school values. Recently, additional support has been provided between these meetings which reflects the authority's recognition of the slower than expected progress made by the school. You report that these have been very helpful so far.

Other external support has had variable outcomes. Although support for leadership has resulted in measurable improvements, the impact of other support has been less

effective, particularly in relation to improving the quality of teaching by working with those teachers judged to require improvement.