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Mrs Debbie McGloin
Headteacher
New Mills School Business & Enterprise College
Church Lane
New Mills
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Dear Mrs McGloin

Special measures monitoring inspection of New Mills School Business & Enterprise College

Following my visit with Kate Richards, Additional Inspector, to your school on 17–18 March 2015, 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 January 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint up to four newly qualified teachers, in any department, 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 Derbyshire and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly
Her Majesty’s Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better in order to increase the progress students make across many subjects, including in English and mathematics, but most especially in science by:
 - eliminating all inadequate teaching
 - urgently challenging the culture of low expectations that some teachers have, both of what they should be expected to do, and what can be achieved by their students
 - ensuring that all teachers plan lessons that take more account of the needs of students of different abilities
 - improving assessment practice so that all teachers regularly mark work and ensure that students have clear advice on how to improve their work
 - applying whole-school and consistent approaches to improving students' literacy skills, particularly writing, and making certain that all students follow the advice that teachers provide.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the information gathered on students' progress and performance includes sufficient detail for school leaders, including governors, to analyse trends over time and is used to improve teachers' planning and to hold them to account for students' achievement
 - urgently reviewing all policies and procedures relating to taking students off-site and ensuring that staff are appropriately trained to assess and minimise risks to students
 - establishing a robust performance management system which provides staff with an accurate evaluation of the quality of their teaching based on the progress that students make
 - including in the school improvement plan clear markers by which progress can be judged and building in processes for more effective monitoring, so that leaders and governors can properly evaluate the impact of their actions
 - reviewing and optimising the use of the pupil premium to raise the achievement of students who are eligible for this funding.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 17–18 March 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a representative of the local authority, and two members of the governing body.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, three teachers have left the school, including the head of the science department. Two teachers have been seconded to the school from Cheadle Hume High School, including a new head of science.

Achievement of pupils at the school

School data show that students are achieving more highly across years groups and subjects. The data concerning Year 11 students are the most accurate as they are informed by the outcomes of recent mock examinations. Senior leaders have improved the system for assuring the quality of teachers' data. At present, however, external checking has been limited to English and art in Key Stage 4.

Disadvantaged students are making better progress and are outperforming their peers in certain regards. A greater proportion of disadvantaged students in Year 11 are making expected progress in English and exceeding expected progress in mathematics when compared to their peers. The achievement of disadvantaged students in Key Stage 3 remains an area for development although it has improved. Higher-level teaching assistants have had a positive impact, particularly in improving younger students' literacy skills. The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good, and the leader responsible for these students has a very good understanding of their individual needs. However, the school does not track the impact of specific help and guidance provided for this group.

Senior leaders are taking steps to improve the achievement of the most-able students and school data show this is beginning to have a positive impact. A new teacher of mathematics is working with subject colleagues and teachers of science and English to help more students to exceed the progress expected of them, across all ability levels. As this teacher was only appointed recently it is too early to judge the impact of her work, though this aspect of achievement has become more prominent in teachers' discussions.

The quality of teaching

Senior and middle leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching; their data show that no inadequate teaching remains. The head of science has been effective in improving the quality of teaching in the department she leads.

The written feedback teachers give students has improved significantly in terms of quality, consistency and the impact that it has on progress. Students are now directed to respond to the marking they receive. The frequency and quality of students' responses have improved although they remain inconsistent. Some excellent examples of marking for literacy were seen during the inspection, although the 'non-negotiable' corrections that students are directed to make are not always carried out. The presentation of students' books is generally much better and this reflects the higher expectations that teachers have for them.

Increasing the level of challenge for all students, and particularly the most able, is a whole-school priority. This is more evident in lessons but has not yet become routine practice.

The leader responsible for improving the quality of teaching oversees a programme of short, weekly teaching and learning briefings for staff. This has been successful in raising the profile of the school's areas for development, offering potentially successful approaches and creating a culture where improving the quality of teaching is of great importance.

Leaders have identified examples of best practice used by certain staff in written feedback and meeting the individual needs of students. The staff concerned lead groups with the remit of developing whole-school practice in these areas, and they are having a positive impact through leading staff training.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The improvement in the quality of teaching has contributed to students behaving better in lessons. Students' attitudes are generally much more positive and this helps them make more progress.

The administration systems for dealing with behavioural and pastoral concerns require improvement because they are not as clearly organised as they need to be. Incident logs do not clearly reflect the current status of ongoing issues or whether the matters have been resolved.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher leads the school very well and this is clearly reflected in the improvements made since the last inspection. She understands that raising the

aspirations of both teachers and the young people in her care is central to improving students' outcomes. She has ensured that members of staff share this view and teachers are working towards this common goal.

Senior leaders have ensured that the systems for tracking students' progress have improved greatly since the last inspection. Leaders can now readily identify the progress students, including groups of students, are making across all subjects. While the proportion of students making expected progress in subjects is identified, the proportion exceeding expected progress is not.

The management of teachers' performance is now more robust. It takes account of students' achievement, the progress evident in students' exercise books, and formal lesson observations. Not all teachers who applied for pay rises or promotion have been given them.

All heads of subject have written a document evaluating the performance of their department. These have been effective in identifying specific areas for development; heads of department are then directed to decide on actions to best address them and to ensure that they are carried out. The process by which these leaders identify the best support for students takes too long.

The new head of science has improved her department significantly in a short space of time. The department is much better organised in terms of curriculum planning and assessment. Key Stage 4 students were assessed and subsequently regrouped, based more closely on their ability levels, in order to support better teaching. The head of science holds fortnightly meetings with individual members of staff in order to provide bespoke support. She is raising both the expectations and engagement of the teachers in her department by sharing best practice, and by encouraging her colleagues to contribute.

The headteacher has improved communication with parents. The quality of the reports that parents receive about their children's progress is now much better. Parents are invited to a forum on a half-termly basis. Their attendance at a session on how best to support students' revision was high and this reflects more involvement of the community in the school.

Since the previous inspection, one governor has left the governing body. Governors have formed new committees with a view to making them more focused on the school's priorities. The governors have had a positive impact on improving relationships with parents. Governors attend the parents' fora to seek their views, and parents now contact the Chair of the Governing Body regularly. The local authority has had less contact from parents, and this indicates that the governors are more effective in dealing with parental correspondence and that things are improving in the school.

Governors are invited to half-termly review meetings in which senior leaders hold subject leaders to account. This process improves governors' knowledge of school issues. Minutes of governing body meetings show that they are holding senior leaders to account, and they appreciate the improved information from the headteacher that supports them in doing this. Governors do not always clearly detail the activities they undertake or the impact of their actions.

External support

The local authority continues to support the school and it has had a positive impact on the progress being made. Science and English consultants visit the school regularly. The science specialist has been coaching teachers and helping to develop curriculum plans. The English consultant has helped to moderate students' progress data, led whole-staff training on literacy and helped develop schemes of work for Key Stage 3. The local authority has funded a school improvement partner who has been effective in offering support and challenge to the headteacher.

A specialist leader of education from Cheadle Hume High School has provided advice and guidance on the development of English schemes of work for Key Stage 3. A senior leader from this support school has worked with the deputy headteacher to improve the systems by which students' progress is tracked. A National Leader of Education has provided effective guidance and support to the headteacher, particularly with regard to the development of a new curriculum plan for next academic year.