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8 May 2015

Lynda Dobson
Birkbeck School and Community Arts College
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Dear Miss Dobson

Special measures monitoring inspection of Birkbeck School and Community Arts College

Following my visit to your school on 7 May 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2015.

Evidence

During this inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, vice chair of the governing body, senior leaders, subject leaders and a representative from the local authority. A short visit to lessons was undertaken to look at the work of students. I viewed a range of documentation, including: the local authority's statement of action; the school's action plan; the school's self-evaluation; and information on the achievement of students.

Context

Since the previous inspection, two governors who acted as joint Chair of the Governing Body have resigned. There is a new Chair of the Governing Body in place. Three teachers are absent due to illness. One teacher has resigned. There are currently four long-term supply teachers working at the school.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The school action plan is not fit for purpose and is not helping senior leaders and members of staff make necessary improvements. The key actions, the timeline for when these should take place and who is responsible for ensuring they happen are not sufficiently clear. The plan has too much detail and it is inaccessible to the governing body. Consequently, senior and middle leaders are unable to effectively ensure that the improvements identified at the previous inspection are going to take place and at a rapid enough pace.

Due to the poor quality of the improvement planning, the governing body is unable to effectively hold senior leaders to account. Governors have shown themselves to be willing to tackle the issues presented by the school and there are some productive links with individual faculties. However governors lack understanding of the urgent priorities and what needs to be done to make sure they are addressed. An external review of governance has not yet been arranged; this is an urgent priority for the school.

The newly established faculty system is valued by senior and middle leaders. The improvement at this level is focused on the quality and consistency of teaching but, in the main, each faculty is working in isolation. There are no improvement plans at department level that reflect the whole-school priorities. Subject leaders have developed ways in which they track the progress of students in their subject area, however whole-school data tracking remains underdeveloped.

Meetings between subject and senior leaders take place regularly and subject leaders feel that they and the teachers they work with are more accountable. Subject leaders have greater autonomy to drive improvement but these processes lack strategic direction.

An external review of pupil premium spending has taken place and areas for development have been identified.

External Support

The local authority has arranged for a dedicated Education Adviser to support the school. The Education Adviser has worked with the senior leaders to improve communication with parents and carers after the previous inspection and has brokered support from a local school and education consultants. A programme of subject leader training is planned.

There is an urgency to ensure that the school has a fit for purpose action plan, that senior leadership activity is more strategic and that the skills of the governing body are further developed.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman

Her Majesty's Inspector