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Mrs Diane Stygal
Acting Headteacher
Trinity School
2 Algores Way
Wisbech
Cambridgeshire
PE13 2TQ

Dear Mrs Stygal

Special measures monitoring inspection of Trinity School

Following my visit to your school on 6–7 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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 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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire.

Yours sincerely

Prue Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently improve the safeguarding of pupils by:
 - ensuring that all members of staff and governors are regularly trained in safeguarding and child protection, and that this training is recorded
 - making sure that all the required safe recruitment checks have been carried out and recorded on the school's single central record
 - completing detailed records about all serious incidents, including where restraint is used, as quickly as possible after wards and ensure that recommendations from fire officer's visits are followed up and recorded
 - ensuring that electrical equipment testing is routinely carried out, as expected.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good and enables all pupils in all subjects to be challenged in their learning and reach their full potential by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - ensuring that there is appropriate specialist subject expertise to meet the requirements of the curriculum
 - ensuring accurate assessment of pupils' attainments and progress, including rigorous and regular moderation of teachers' assessments with other schools
 - raising expectations and ensuring that teachers take full account of what each pupil already knows and can do so that lessons challenge them
 - improving the quality and effectiveness of marking
 - ensuring that there is a rigorous and effective approach to teaching reading, writing and spelling in all subjects.

- Improve pupils' behaviour including their attendance, by:
 - ensuring that the school's behaviour policy is understood thoroughly by pupils, parents and staff, and is consistently implemented
 - ensuring that behaviour incidents are routinely analysed so that further improvement can be made in the quality of teaching and support
 - increasing attendance through setting ambitious targets, and working closely with the pupils, including for those on part-time programmes, and their parents, and other agencies to achieve these
 - reporting attendance patterns and information about behaviour, exclusions and other sanctions, and rewards routinely by governors.

- Improve the curriculum by:
 - ensuring that it is broad, balanced and relevant for each pupil, and prepares them for their next stage of education, employment or training
 - providing high quality careers education and guidance, and work related learning
 - planning and implementing provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to prepare them as well as possible for life in modern day Britain.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - rigorously monitoring important aspects of the school’s work, in particular pupils’ progress and their behaviour, and the quality of teaching so that leaders and managers have a thorough and accurate understanding of how well each pupil is learning
 - ensuring that this information is drawn together to provide an accurate picture of how well the school is improving with respect to ambitious targets set in the improvement plan
 - improving the effectiveness of communication of school leaders and managers with other staff so that the policies and developments are implemented and morale is improved
 - ensuring that performance management is rigorous and that targets focus, especially on improving pupils’ progress and behaviour
 - ensuring that expectations and responsibilities for leaders and managers at all levels are understood and met to a high standard.

- Improve governance by ensuring it has full, detailed and accurate information about the school’s performance, in particular relating to targets set in the improvement plan, and with which it can hold all leaders and managers to account to provide high quality education.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess and advise how the new governing body can improve this aspect of leadership.

The school should not appoint any newly qualified teachers.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 6–7 May 2015

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents including those recording monitoring of teaching, assessment information and development plans. She met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, a higher level teaching assistant and a representative of the local authority. The inspector observed lessons and behaviour at all three sites; these observations were undertaken jointly with the acting headteacher, the principal leader or an assistant headteacher.

Context

Since the last inspection, the leadership team has been reorganised. There are new assistant headteachers at the Foxton and Fenland sites. There are also two new, fully-qualified teachers at the Fenland site. An interim executive board has replaced the governing body.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The acting headteacher has raised expectations of students' achievement. An analysis of every student's attainment has been established and individual progress is tracked with this baseline assessment as a starting point. With external support from leaders at a local teaching school, subject leaders are establishing and developing accurate assessment so that teaching can build on what students need to do to improve quickly.

Leaders now analyse the performance of different groups of students and have an emerging understanding of how well these groups are achieving. This analysis is in its early stages so it does not consider how well, for example, students with specific learning difficulties are progressing or how effectively targeted intervention is enabling students to accelerate their learning. Nevertheless, students' progress is now rigorously and regularly reviewed and staff are held to greater account for the progress of the students they teach.

Students' work shows that there is a mixed picture of progress. In most of the lessons seen, students were well supported by staff to make gains in their learning and to acquire new subject-specific vocabulary. Increasingly, students are expected to present their work independently. The quality of presentation and of basic skills such as handwriting is still variable and below that expected. Where teachers require students to pay attention to spelling and handwriting, standards are improving.

Because it has been necessary to put new systems in place to assess and track students' work, it is difficult to make an overall analysis of the extent to which the changes in teaching are helping students to make better progress. It is evident however, from observations in lessons and early analysis of assessment, that more students are starting to make similar progress to that expected of their peers nationally.

The quality of teaching

The proportion of inadequate teaching has been rapidly reduced. The quality of teaching does, however, still vary. The high turnover of staff and the difficulties faced in recruiting teachers with relevant experience mean it is not improving as quickly as leaders had intended. Expectations have been raised and where staff have been supported to develop their practice over the past term there are strong signs of improvement. In these better planned lessons, students show more engagement in their learning because teachers take care to design activities that meet individual student's needs and interests. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson at the Hartford site, each student used a different approach to research and plan a piece of writing inspired by H G Wells' 'The Time Machine'. The approaches matched each student's learning styles and interests. This, combined with highly engaging teaching and very positive relationships between the teacher and students, led to them being fully absorbed in their work; as a result they made good progress.

Again, where staff have received support and training to improve the accuracy of assessment, the use of marking and the management of behaviour, students are responding positively. Effective discussions between students and teachers about the objectives for learning, throughout Year 7 and Year 8 English and science lessons at the Fenland site, supported students to remain engaged in their work and to link new and previous learning. This enabled them to make good progress, in some instances recalling and using complex subject-specific vocabulary. In these lessons, teachers' confident use of the new behaviour-management strategies ensured students were rewarded for good behaviour and showed clear development in their belief in their own abilities, making good progress as a result.

Where teaching remains weaker, it is because staff are very new and have not had time to benefit from training and support or because new initiatives are not implemented conscientiously. For example, at the Hartford site, the use of the new behaviour-management systems was less evident in most of the lessons seen because new strategies have not been introduced with the same rigour and high expectations seen at the other sites.

In some lessons, less thought is given to matching activities to the learning needs and interests of students. In these lessons, expectations of students are too low,

activities are uninteresting and students show lower levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning. At times, teachers speed up the pace of instruction in lessons as a strategy to maintain positive behaviour. However, this results in students not being able to keep up and so they do not make the progress they are capable of.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is improving. Staff and students are benefiting from clearer guidance about what is, and is not, acceptable. In lessons, most staff confidently remind students of these expectations and of the sanctions agreed should they not conform to the standards set. A 'zero tolerance' approach to core expectations about the wearing of school uniform, the use of mobile phones in school and bringing in energy drinks or smoking, is proving to be effective. Staff teams ensure these expectations are met first thing in the morning. As a result, students are responding more positively and are starting to meet the standards set more readily. Systems to reward students rapidly when they behave and learn well are proving to be successful. Where these rewards are used according to policy, students are seen to be making greater efforts to succeed.

Audits of behaviour have been carried out at each site by the recently appointed 'behaviour advocate' and students have been involved in a student behaviour conference to establish new procedures to manage behaviour. Students say they appreciate the rewards they receive for behaving well. Extra support has been made available at the Fenland site to manage the most challenging behaviour which means students are spending less time out of their lessons. Wisely, the acting headteacher has waited to create a final policy from the outcomes of the analysis and development of successful behaviour management. This is so that once introduced it will be fully understood and easily implemented by all participants in the school community.

There are, however, still too many incidents of unacceptable behaviour; in part, these occur when teaching fails to engage students, to recognise the abilities they have or to use the reward systems well. During the inspection, almost all the students were polite and proud to share and discuss their work with the inspector. The one incident of challenging behaviour observed was sensitively and appropriately managed by staff who showed confidence in the strategies and procedures established.

Attendance remains below the national average; there is some evidence to show that the renewed focus on improving attendance is successful for students who attend the school full time. School leaders and the local authority need to address urgently the small number of students who are on the school's roll who are not receiving any education off site, either with another provider or at home. The

recording of the non-attendance of these students contributes to a very low overall picture.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The uncertainty about the future of the school is an impediment to its rapid improvement. The initial academy trust found to sponsor the school's conversion to academy status has withdrawn from the process. There continues to be uncertainty about the interim leadership arrangements and about future plans for Trinity School. The interim executive board, initiated by the local authority, has been in place since February. Established to provide governance during a period of transition, members initially worked to secure a strong academy sponsor. Now that this has failed, the Chair is determined to provide rigorous challenge to leadership and to the local authority to ensure that, whatever the future holds for Trinity, the work of everyone is focused on improving provision for the current students. The board receives analysis of how well the school is improving through the local authority monitoring group. Only recently have members developed an understanding of the key aspects of the school's work such as analyses of the quality of teaching, achievement of different groups of students, attendance and behaviour.

Despite the uncertainty, the acting headteacher, with effective support from the local authority adviser and the national leader of education, is leading development with absolute determination to improve the outcomes students achieve. She is building a leadership team that is growing in confidence and starting to have an impact across all of the school's sites. Arrangements for staff from all three sites to meet very regularly to discuss their work are effective and are building stronger teams with shared expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. For example, subject leaders meet with their colleagues responsible for teaching the same subject at other sites, and staff responsible for managing behaviour at all three sites, meet regularly. Subject leaders are well supported in this by leaders from a mainstream secondary academy. This is bringing increased accuracy to the assessment of students' work. As yet, leaders are not monitoring the quality of teaching in their respective subjects.

A baseline analysis of the attainment of each student has been established. Against this, leaders are tracking the progress each student makes. The acting headteacher is in the process of setting challenging targets for each student with the expectation for most that they will achieve as well as students nationally. Improved assessment is beginning to feature in teachers' planning. As a result, where teaching has improved, students' learning needs are better met. To address the historic underachievement of students and the wide range of examinations taken by some, the acting headteacher is also reviewing the qualifications students are entered for. This is to ensure they are the most suitable to enable students to achieve their best and to enable them to pursue their chosen future careers.

The headteacher and national leader of education have monitored the quality of teaching carefully. Staff have been given guidance on how to improve their work and this is resulting in improvement where staff are permanent employees. Until now training provided to bring about improvement has been planned for all staff and this has resulted in much better planning of lessons, improved marking and better feedback for students about their learning and their behaviour. There is not enough detail in relation to the quality of individual teacher's subject knowledge or the progress students make in lessons in these evaluations.

Improvements made to procedures for safeguarding students have been sustained. All child protection training is in place; new staff receive interim guidance and their training is planned at the next available date. The recording of serious incidents is more rigorous and the acting headteacher monitors records carefully. Leaders are beginning to analyse when and why incidents of poor behaviour occur.

Staff spoken to say that communication has improved and that they feel better supported. In most instances it is clear that the drive of the acting headteacher and the changes she is leading are enabling all staff to lead improvement more and to ensure they fulfil the new and higher expectations of them. There is still some lack of engagement in a small number of instances, for example, the use of new behaviour strategies at the Hartford site. This could hold back the rapid success at all sites.

External support

There are concerns about the provision for some of the most vulnerable students; also about advice given by different local authority services regarding the action the acting headteacher should take to address the poor attendance of some students. The level of support and advice for the acting headteacher in these very specific aspects of the school's work has not been rapid or detailed enough.

The acting headteacher has, however, benefited from the local authority adviser's support for action planning and analysing and monitoring the work of the school. The advice provided by the national leader of education has been effective in improving the quality of teaching. Subject leaders have developed the quality of their work as a result of the advice from their mainstream colleagues. The recent appointment of a member of the local authority support team as principal leader, for two days a week, is effective in supporting the acting headteacher to develop the school strategically.