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Mr Adrian Kneeshaw
Headteacher
Carlton Bolling College
Undercliffe Lane
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD3 0DU

Dear Mr Kneeshaw

Special measures monitoring inspection of Carlton Bolling College

Following my visit with Clive Hurren and Christine Kennedy, Additional Inspectors, to your college on 19 and 20 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 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 college is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.
- The college may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection, but only with my prior approval.

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 Strategic Director of Children's Services for Bradford.

Yours sincerely

Michael Maddison

Associate Inspector

Appointed as an Associate Inspector under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule V2 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006

Annex

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

- Immediately carry out a review of governance so that the governing body is fit for purpose, understands its role and responsibilities, carries out its statutory and other duties within the boundaries expected and ensures that:
 - all policies meet requirements and are up to date and ratified by the governing body, especially those related to child protection and safeguarding
 - the named governor for safeguarding is suitably trained
 - staff and governors are well trained on how to identify and respond to possible risks to students from extreme or radical views so they can better safeguard students from such risks
 - school policies and practice are sensitive to and meet the needs of all students so that all are treated equally, with equal opportunities to benefit from all that the college has to offer
 - the views of parents and carers are gathered by governors regularly to inform the college's work.

- Reduce the number of students who are persistently absent, by:
 - improving the use of the detailed information leaders hold about attendance of different groups so they can investigate, and then tackle, the causes of non-attendance.

- Raise students' achievements in all subjects further, by:
 - implementing fully the recent strategies to drive improvement in teaching
 - tackling the variability in the quality of teaching across all key stages, including the sixth form and in different subjects
 - tackling the causes of some students' lack of engagement in lessons and by ensuring a consistent approach to the management of behaviour in all lessons
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what students can do and high expectations of the quality and presentation of work they complete
 - raising students' understanding of what good achievement looks like by showcasing and celebrating high quality work on classroom walls and displays across the college
 - sharing the strongest practice in teaching including marking and feedback and effective teacher questioning and by seeking to learn from good practice outside the college.

- Improve the quality and impact of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that the college's provision gives high priority to helping students stay safe by teaching them to understand the possible risks posed by the behaviour of others
 - ensuring that the governing body contributes to, rather than detracts from, the college's overall effectiveness
 - senior leaders and governors, through their actions and behaviours, working to improve relationships and trust among the staff community
 - ensuring that changes that affect students' experience of school, including of the curriculum, take equal account of their different needs and faiths
 - ensuring that all middle leaders have the skills to raise students' achievement and can demonstrate the impact of their work through improving outcomes over time.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the college's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the college.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 19 and 20 May 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the college's work and met with the headteacher, members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), one of whom was the Chair, senior and middle leaders, individual teaching and support staff, and the local authority's senior area achievement officer (SAAO). They visited 26 part-lessons, of which three were joint observations with senior leaders, attended two assemblies and visited eight tutorial sessions. They spoke informally to many students, as well as having formal meetings with students representing Years 7, 9 and the sixth form.

Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including: information about the current achievement of students in all year groups, but especially in Year 11 and the sixth form; the updated college improvement plan and college self-evaluation form; details of the training programme for staff; minutes of the meetings of the IEB and the School Specific Monitoring Group (SSMG); behaviour and attendance data; a range of policies; and the most recent analysis of the work undertaken to support disadvantaged students for whom the college receives additional funding. They scrutinised students' work while they were in classrooms.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, there has been one change in staffing with the departure of the head of English. At the moment no members of staff are due to leave the college at the end of the summer term. Five teachers have been recruited for the autumn term 2015, one in English and two each in geography and history. The membership of the IEB has remained stable with seven members. The SSMG and IEB have instituted a review of governance and plans have been drawn up for a shadow governing body to begin work in the autumn term.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The improvement in achievement of students in Year 11, as noted at the time of the last monitoring inspection, has continued. Evidence presented on this visit suggests that in relation to attainment and progress, more students will gain at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C and more students will make at least expected progress in English and mathematics. Action to tackle underachievement last year in weaker subject areas, such as humanities, has started to have a positive effect on students' learning. However, the full effect of measures taken will have a greater impact for students currently in Years 9 and 10, rather than for those in Year 11. Senior leaders are confident that the gaps between those students who are disadvantaged and other students in the college are narrowing. This encouraging picture of achievement is the result of a number of factors, including: better quality teaching; aspirational targets for all students; smaller class sizes in English and mathematics allowing teachers to focus much more on individuals; a more robust

tracking system; and thorough analysis of data and feedback to members of staff after each of the six performance data collection points each year. As a result, more students, including those who are disadvantaged, are predicted to achieve their targets this year.

Although students in the sixth form taking vocational subjects have achieved extremely well in the last few years, those on academic courses have not. In fact, the attainment and achievement of students taking AS and A-level courses have been poor. This disappointing position is to be explained by the fact that the sixth form has not been a priority for the college and there has been a notable absence of effective systems and structures to check on students' learning and to support them to do well. During this current academic year, senior leaders have started to remedy this situation. Students' progress is now much more closely tracked and more effective action is being taken where underachievement is identified. As a result, students are doing better and the most recent assessment of students' progress indicates that those on academic courses are expected to gain better results and make better progress than students did in 2014. Those on vocational courses are also predicted to do well, but perhaps not quite as well as students on the same courses last year.

Inspection evidence from lesson observations indicates that students' learning and progress are improving. This is because more teachers have higher expectations. They are also using the data provided to plan appropriate activities and resources which ensure that students are able to access work set and be challenged in their thinking. This is happening across foundation subjects as well as in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. When this occurs, students make marked strides in their learning. However, although more staff are using the assessment data to guide their planning, this is not the practice in all classrooms across all subjects. Inspectors observed teaching which had not been prepared bearing in mind the assessment data available. As a result, students were given the same work, even though they had different starting points in their learning. In these lessons, students were not as focused as they should have been, some lost concentration and others became involved in off-task chatter. When this occurred, students did not make enough progress in their learning.

Inspectors noted at the last monitoring inspection that weak oracy skills were slowing the progress some students were making in their learning. On this visit, more teachers were observed developing students' speaking and listening by asking them to speak up, rephrase their answers into full sentences and use formal language. However, this is very much 'work in progress' and senior leaders are aware that there is still much more to do to improve students' oracy as part of strengthening their literacy skills.

The quality of teaching

Students' progress is improving because the quality of teaching continues to improve. There is still some variability in the quality of teaching within and across subjects. However, the focus upon eradicating weaker teaching is having much success. The work of lead teachers, the bespoke guidance for individual teachers, the compulsory and optional training sessions, and the support programmes for those who are felt to be in need of particular assistance, are all helping to raise the quality of teaching and learning gradually but perceptibly. On this monitoring inspection, inspectors identified a number of strengths of teaching across the college, including the sixth form, notably:

- effective questioning by teachers which helped to deepen students' knowledge and understanding
- frequent progress checks which enabled teachers to gauge how well students had assimilated new learning and so amend their plans to ensure that students made at least expected progress
- thorough planning and preparation which meant that teachers had a clear picture of what they wanted students to know, do and understand at the end of the lesson which they did not know, could not do and did not understand at the start
- opportunities for collaborative learning which enabled all students to learn from each other and to make effective progress in their learning
- high expectations which challenged all students to think carefully beyond the immediate work which was set
- the judicious use of assessment data so that students were given appropriate work which reflected their different starting points
- high quality marking and feedback through the use of the 'feed forward' form which required students to reflect on their immediate past learning and do something extra which strengthened their learning by adding additional information or explanation, or by correcting errors or misunderstandings.

Although the quality of teaching continues to improve, senior leaders are well aware that there is still much to do to ensure that these strengths are evident consistently in every lesson every day. Where teaching is weaker, the level of expectation and challenge is not high enough to engage students fruitfully in their learning. It is at these times that students' behaviour declines in its quality and its acceptability.

Overall, teachers are working hard to improve their practice. They are benefiting from the opportunities to learn from each other and they are willing to try different techniques. The decision to have smaller class sizes in English and mathematics is helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning in these subjects, because teachers are focusing much more effectively on individual students and ensuring that work set matches their ability. It is planned to extend this approach to class size to humanities subjects from September 2015.

Teachers increasingly recognise that classroom and corridor displays can have a marked effect on students' attitudes to learning and on the progress they make. As a result, the quality of classroom displays is improving. However, it is important to bear in mind that, when celebrating students' work or providing support information on walls and boards, the way in which it is displayed is just as important as what is displayed. Some particularly effective and eye-catching displays were seen on this monitoring inspection. They are effective because they are clear and well spaced out so that the messages could be grasped easily. This work is inextricably linked to that of developing students' communication skills, which is receiving a much higher profile than before. The presentation of work in books remains variable, but there is evidence of students taking greater pride in their work and greater care of their exercise books and folders.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The college has continued to place considerable emphasis upon improving students' behaviour and safety, especially in relation to safeguarding. This work has focused on ensuring that they are well placed to judge risk and has been pursued in assemblies, tutor sessions and the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme (PSHCE). At its heart has been a continued commitment to promote British values, tackle extremism and prevent radicalisation. Students recognise the importance of this work and have commented that they have found this work thought provoking. During the monitoring inspection, inspectors observed an uncompromising assembly delivered separately to students in Year 10 and the sixth form, which explored the dangers of current Middle Eastern extremism and why it was important for young people to learn about these issues. This is part of a planned programme of work for all year groups. Follow-up activities in tutor time and PSHCE lessons will target the key messages emanating from the assembly.

Students' behaviour in lessons and around college continues to improve. The number of fixed-term exclusions is falling, as is the number of incidents to which senior staff and the student support leaders have to respond during the day. Behaviour out of lessons is generally well managed. Senior staff are clear that when teaching, all staff must 'meet and greet' students when they move between lessons as this helps to instil orderly conduct in and around the college. In lessons, students generally have positive attitudes to learning. When their behaviour falls short of expectations, staff use the behaviour management system with increasing consistency. However, inspectors viewed few incidents of this nature on this monitoring inspection. The small amount of off-task behaviour which was witnessed was directly linked to teaching which lacked challenge and had low expectations of what students could achieve.

The attendance of students in Years 7 to 11 is improving, as is that of those who are classified as being persistently absent from college. This is the result of focused work by staff, especially the administrative staff in the college's attendance office and the educational welfare officer, who is tenacious in her approach to her responsibilities. However, college leaders are well aware of the need to continue to maintain their

efforts in improving the attendance of particular groups, especially those who are of East European ethnic heritage whose attendance is too variable and remains a cause of concern. The attendance of students in the sixth form has been far too inconsistent and is in need of much improvement. Systems for tracking and following up on their attendance and punctuality have been strengthened and attendance and punctuality are improving. However, there is still much to do to ensure that post-16 students are fully aware of the importance of regular attendance and the impact poor attendance can have on their learning. The college's analysis of attendance and behaviour data is now much stronger and this is allowing senior leaders and members of the IEB to have a more informed picture of patterns and trends for groups of students as well as individuals.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders are working hard to ensure that the improvements in, for example, the quality of teaching and students' attendance, behaviour and achievement, are embedded. Systems have been put in place to support staff in their teaching. Unnecessary procedures and meetings have been removed. As a result, teachers acknowledge that they are able to focus on what they are employed to do, namely to teach. They recognise they are accountable for the progress of the students they teach, but they feel that they are being supported and guided to undertake their responsibilities by well-focused senior leaders. Middle leaders are becoming more consistent in their work. Appropriate training and closer line management by senior leaders are also helping to ensure that they are more effective. There is much greater staff stability and staff morale is high, higher than it has been for some years.

These whole-college improvements are due to a number of factors, the most fundamental of which is the central focus and determination of the headteacher supported by his team of senior leaders. They have grown in stature in the last year as their hard work has started to produce the results desired. They are confident that improvements are being embedded, but they are not overly assured or complacent. On the contrary, they are well aware that the journey out of special measures is not yet completed and that there is still much to do.

The college has continued to work hard to engage with parents. Returns from their completion of questionnaires at parents' evenings show that they are generally positive about the college, the quality of teaching and their children's learning. However, the proportion of parents completing such questionnaires is rarely higher than 60% in any one year group. In addition, the analysis of their responses shows, for example, that some parents of students in Years 10 and 11 feel that appropriate homework is not set and that work is not marked regularly. Senior leaders are well aware that there is still a considerable amount to do to strengthen links with parents so that they can respond quickly and effectively to any concerns.

At the start of this academic year, one of the three Raising Standards Leaders (RSL) took charge of helping to bring about better achievement in the sixth form. She has

also assimilated some, but not all, of the duties of the previous head of sixth form. However, the division of responsibilities across a number of different individuals means that no one person has an overall picture of what is going on in this key part of the college. In addition, there is no sixth-form development plan which goes beyond raising achievement and the sixth form appears in the college improvement plan only in relation to raising achievement. As the college approaches the end of the first year of the role of the RSL for the sixth form and in the light of the local authority review of the sixth form, it is timely to consider a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the system which has been put in place. This would help to ensure that the avowed ambitions of the college in relation to the planned expansion and strengthening of sixth-form provision, opportunities and outcomes for students do materialise as desired.

There is increasing evidence that the range of strategies put in place to support better achievement is helping disadvantaged, as well as non-disadvantaged, students to make improvements in their learning and progress. Many of these strategies have been provided through the additional funding allocated by the government for students eligible for support through the pupil premium. However, it is not possible to identify the full effectiveness of this additional money, because the schemes on which it has been spent have been part of a much wider set of strategies to raise achievement for all students. It is essential that the expenditure of the pupil premium money is disaggregated from all other spending, so that the full impact of the college's approach can be evaluated by senior leaders and governors.

Plans to develop the governance of the college are well under way. A review of the effectiveness of governance is currently taking place and it will report by the end of June. It is proposed that a shadow governing body begin work in the autumn term, with the intention that it will replace the IEB in January 2016. The line of accountability from senior leaders through the IEB to the SSMG is strong, with members of both groups undertaking their responsibilities effectively. Members of the IEB display high levels of commitment. The minutes of their meetings reveal a focused business-like approach to the issues which they discuss, succinctness in their proceedings and discernment in their comments. They are rightly focused at this time on key strategic issues and on holding senior leaders to account. The Chair of the IEB, for example, has regular meetings with the senior leader responsible for achievement, at which she challenges him to explain how well students are doing. IEB members continue to monitor progress against each of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Their work is effectively helping to ensure that the college remains well focused on being removed from special measures as soon as is feasible.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide support as required. It has focused on specific tasks, such as the separate reviews of humanities and of the sixth form. These were undertaken by the local authority's SAAO, who has also supported the work of the IEB and the SSMG. His commitment and the level of challenge he has

provided have been much appreciated by the college. Individual teachers and specific subjects have continued to benefit from the work of a number of external consultants, for example, in moderating and ratifying teachers' judgements of the coursework of current Year 11 students in English.