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Miss Evelyn Forde
Principal
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Dear Miss Forde

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ely College

Following my visit to your academy on 23 and 24 February 2016 with Jeremy Rowe, Ofsted Inspector, 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2015. The full list of 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 academy is not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 Rapid Improvement Board, the Chief Executive of the CfBT Schools Trust, the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire, the Education Funding Agency and the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2015.

- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the sixth form, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have the subject knowledge to be able to assess students' progress accurately
 - make effective use of assessment information to organise their teaching to support the learning of students whose attainment is typically average, or below average, when they start at the academy
 - give students appropriate advice when marking work
 - help students to steadily build on their knowledge and skills so that they have the confidence to work hard and try their best in lessons
 - make effective use of teachers' questioning to help students use, extend and develop their knowledge and understanding across all subjects.

- Improve the rates of students' progress and raise attainment in all key stages by:
 - setting targets for students that are stretching but are also realistic and achievable
 - ensuring that all students are set work that is suitably challenging for them, especially those who are of typically average, or below average, ability
 - improving students' numeracy and written literacy skills in Key Stage 3 to help them succeed with the challenge of GCSE in Key Stage 4 and academic studies in the sixth form
 - making certain that leaders accurately assess the learning and progress of disadvantaged students to help them make rapid progress and narrow the attainment gap between them, their classmates and students nationally.

- Improve students' behaviour, safety and attitudes to learning by:
 - carrying out a review of procedures for managing students' behaviour in order to identify and deal with current weaknesses
 - reducing the high numbers of students who are removed from lessons within the academy on a daily basis
 - meeting with students to discuss their views about the management of behaviour and what can be done to support them to make the right choices

- consulting with younger students and those who are disabled, or who have special educational needs, in order to understand their concerns about their experiences at the academy then act quickly upon this
 - restoring students' respect for their College Council so that they have confidence that it will work for them
 - improving the way students currently travel around the site to avoid congestion in some corridors
 - improving supervision throughout dining areas and ensuring that all staff on duty are confident in managing students' behaviour and in applying relevant policy
 - making sure that students understand the risks of sharing personal information online.
- Rapidly improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
- the immediate improvement of safeguarding; by ending current arrangements which allow adult visitors studying at the academy, who are not subject to safeguarding checks, to have opportunities for unsupervised access
 - making certain that all leaders evaluate the quality of teaching accurately by taking full account of students' learning in their work and in lessons
 - improving the management and use of student assessment information so that senior and subject leaders have an accurate view of the achievement of all students
 - ensuring that improvement plans are thorough, detailed and timed, so they support the long-term progress in students' learning, for both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4
 - making sure that the curriculum meets legal requirements for delivering religious education across Key Stage 4
 - requiring all leaders to establish clear monitoring arrangements to confirm the impact of their improvement planning
 - ensuring that appropriate professional development is provided for staff and that all teachers and leaders are subject to rigorous performance management arrangements
 - consulting widely with parents on future improvement plans and always acting quickly when parents raise a concern with the academy
 - increasing the capacity of governance, at all levels, so that all relevant duties can be fulfilled appropriately, without potential conflict of interest, so that leaders can be more effectively challenged and held to account.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 23–24 February 2016

Evidence

Inspectors met with the Principal and other members of the academy's leadership team, including the member of staff responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors observed teaching in 20 lessons, five of which were joint observations with senior leaders, and also observed tutor times. One of the inspectors observed an assembly. The lead inspector met with five governors, including the Chair of the Rapid Improvement Board, and a representative of the CfBT Trust. The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the academy's improvement plan and the single central record. They also looked at the procedures that are used to deal with incidents of poor behaviour and bullying. Inspectors met with students both formally, to discuss behaviour and teaching and learning, and informally, during lunch breaks. They also scrutinised pupils' books. Inspectors spoke to members of the teaching staff about appraisal and the opportunities that they have for training and development. Inspectors also investigated a complaint that had been made regarding an alleged bullying incident.

Context

Since the previous inspection, three teachers have left the academy and six new teachers have been appointed. A new head of mathematics took up post at the start of this half term. There are currently 11 teaching posts being filled by temporary appointments. Although Ely College remains part of the CfBT Education Trust, it is currently seeking a new sponsor as CfBT has signalled its intention to relinquish its responsibilities for managing the academy in the near future.

Outcomes for pupils

Although improvements have been made to the quality of teaching these are not yet having an impact on enough lessons and the rates of progress that most pupils are currently making are too slow. The work seen in pupils' books, across the academy and across subjects, indicates that levels of attainment remain below where they should be for too many pupils. The progress that is being made by pupils of average or low ability is a particular concern. The work seen in their books indicates that their attainment is well below where it should be. Senior leaders have not ensured that teachers do enough to support the development of literacy skills for these pupils. Their progress and attainment in mathematics is also weak. Too often, the quality of teaching is not good enough to help them to close gaps in their learning in mathematics and make the progress that is required for them to achieve well. Conversely, many of the most-able pupils are making good progress. Teachers have higher expectations of these pupils, not just in relation to what they can achieve but also in respect of their attitudes to learning, and the way in which they present their work.

The academy's most recent assessment data indicate that the percentage of pupils who are likely to achieve five or more GCSE grades at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, will increase this year. Senior leaders are ensuring that the Year 11 pupils are well prepared for their GCSE examinations in the summer term. Pupils have been provided with good opportunities to attend revision classes after school. They were also able to attend extra lessons during the recent holiday period.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Although the quality of teaching is improving there are still too many lessons in which pupils fail to make the progress of which they are capable. As a result, pupils, particularly those of lower and middle ability, are not making enough progress and their attainment remains below where it should be.

In the weaker lessons that were seen during this inspection, teachers failed to take account of pupils' prior learning, and the work which they set did not provide enough challenge to move pupils' learning on. Inspectors also saw a number of lessons in which pupils demonstrated poor attitudes to learning. This behaviour often led to disruption and pupils made little progress as a result.

Some improvements have been made to the quality of feedback that pupils receive about their work. Inspectors saw good examples of teachers correcting misconceptions and providing good advice to pupils on how to improve. However some teachers are still failing to follow the academy's marking policy and inspectors again saw books with work that had been left unmarked for long periods. The standard of work and the quality of presentation in these books was poor and there was little evidence of progress.

Inspectors observed some highly effective teaching during this inspection. In these lessons, teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge, asked challenging questions and provided good feedback to pupils about their work. Pupils' behaviour was excellent and the work in their books indicated that they are making very good progress.

The system used to set targets for pupils' progress and attainment has been improved. These targets are now more realistic, as they take account of their current levels of attainment as well as historic test results. More importantly, they also provide useful advice to help pupils to understand how to improve their work and move on in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The vast majority of pupils behave well at Ely College. However, too often, learning is disrupted by a small number of pupils who do not settle to their work and often prevent others from doing so. This disruption occurs mainly, though not exclusively, in lower-ability sets where pupils are already behind where they should be, and need

to make rapid progress if they are to catch up with their peers. The disruption to lessons causes frustration for those pupils who behave well and want to learn.

The pupils spoken to during this inspection said that not all teachers manage behaviour well enough. Inspectors agree with this view. They witnessed several incidents where teachers failed to follow the academy's agreed procedures for dealing with low-level disruption, and this often resulted in other pupils becoming involved or not being able to learn effectively. Senior leaders acknowledge that poor behaviour is currently a barrier to effective learning for too many pupils. They are in the process of modifying the behaviour policy in order to simplify and improve the procedures that teachers use for dealing with disruptive behaviour.

The good behaviour seen at the previous inspection was still evident in pupils' conduct around the academy and in the respect that they showed towards each other in most of the lessons that were observed. It was also evident in the Year 7 assembly, where pupils listened respectfully while others expressed their views. Inspectors spoke to pupils about bullying, checked the academy's records and observed behaviour at break and lunchtime. Pupils said that bullying does happen from time to time. They said that staff are approachable and that issues are dealt with, although some pupils said that in the past some incidents were not dealt with as quickly as they could have been. Nevertheless, pupils told inspectors that they feel safe while at the academy.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders have taken action to challenge ineffective teaching and this is beginning to address the decline in pupils' progress and attainment. However, the pace of improvement has not been fast enough and achievement across the college is still too low. There is much work to be done if the academy is to be removed from special measures within the next 12 months.

The checks that are made on teaching and learning are not yet effective in all subjects. For example, some teachers regularly fail to follow agreed procedures for assessing and marking pupils' work. As a result too many pupils receive little or no advice about how to improve their work. The low expectation exhibited by these teachers means that pupils in their classes regularly complete work of poor quality without challenge. The progress seen in some of the books was negligible as a result.

Academy leaders, including governors, recognise that too much responsibility currently rests with the Principal and two vice-Principals. Changes are being made to the wider leadership team so that leaders at all levels take responsibility for monitoring and evaluating teaching, and are held to account for the progress that pupils make. However, it is too early to see the impact of the changes that have been made. Senior leaders have reviewed and improved the academy's improvement

plans. More precise targets have been set for improvement and the impact of the actions taken is reviewed regularly by academy leaders, including governors.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. Appropriate checks are made on all adults who work with pupils and the systems that the academy has for registering concerns about pupil welfare are well understood by staff. The academy provides effective support for pupils who are experiencing emotional difficulties. Teachers and other adults work effectively to support these pupils with academic and social aspects of learning.

The Rapid Improvement Board, which replaced the governing body in May 2015, has established effective links with the academy's leadership team and is making a valuable contribution to the academy's development. Governors on this board have a wealth of relevant experience which they are using to good effect to support and challenge senior leaders. They are rigorous in their approach, often delving deeply into issues rather than accepting information and reports without challenge. For example, the board recently questioned why predictions for achievement in mathematics were high when other evidence that they had been presented with suggested that the quality of teaching in mathematics was not as good as it should be. Governors also supported the Principal in improving the academy's improvement plan.

External support

The academy's sponsor, the CfBT Schools Trust, has continued to provide additional support for the leadership team. This has been valued by the academy and has contributed to some of the improvements that were seen during this inspection. Support has also been made available for some heads of department. However, the support that has been provided since the academy was judged to require special measures, in February 2015, has not been effective in helping leaders to make the necessary improvements quickly enough.