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29 October 2015

Mrs Jane Hadlow  
Castle Community College  
Mill Road  
Deal  
Kent  
CT14 9BD

Dear Mrs Hadlow

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Castle Community College**

Following my visit to your academy on 14 and 15 October 2015 with Helena Read, Her Majesty's Inspector and Richard Owen, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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 academy is taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers in English and science only.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Kent County Council.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hughes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2014.**

- Significantly improve the quality of teaching across all subjects by ensuring that all teachers:
  - have higher expectations of what students can achieve
  - regularly set work that challenges and extends the students' skills, especially their skills in writing
  - apply the college's policy on marking.
- Raise the achievement of all groups, especially boys, the most-able students and those supported by additional funding, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
  - consistently providing students with work that meets their needs and challenges their knowledge and understanding
  - refusing to accept work that is poorly presented and is clearly below the students' ability levels
  - ensuring work is properly marked and that the students are given precise written feedback on what has been done well, what could be improved and how.
- Significantly improve behaviour, especially at the Mill Road site, in lessons and around the building to ensure that boisterous behaviour in corridors is eliminated and that classroom learning is not disturbed by the poor conduct of a significant minority of students. Ensure that all staff apply the college's policy on behaviour management.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
  - rigorously checking the progress of all student groups by ensuring that the available performance data are accurate and fit for purpose and can be readily used by teachers to help with their planning for learning
  - improving the process by which the quality of teaching and learning is monitored
  - ensuring that the curriculum provided adequately meets the needs of all students, especially the more able
  - ensuring that governors are more effective in holding senior staff to account for the college's performance.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the college's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken to assess how this area of leadership can be improved.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 October 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim Principal, the sponsor designate, governors, middle leaders and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also met with groups of students, visited both sites and viewed the proposed location for the new building.

### **Context**

SchoolsCompany Trust remains the sponsor designate of the academy. The interim Principal remains in temporary control of the academy. A new vice-chair of governors has been elected. Two new governors have been recruited since the last monitoring visit. Contractors have begun work on the site of the new building. A large number of teachers left the academy at the end of the summer term. All have been replaced where required. A new senior leader has joined to lead improvements in teaching. Inspectors did not focus on changes to governance at this inspection, because the review was carried out previously and the governing body is being strengthened continually.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

You were rightly disappointed that GCSE results in 2015 were lower than expected. Year 11 students, in general, did better than in the previous year. There were improvements, for example, in the proportion achieving five GCSEs, including English and mathematics (37% in 2015 compared with 33% in 2014) at grade C or above. The proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics also increased. However, the proportion of students making expected progress in English decreased. Close to half (43%) of the students achieved a C or better in both English and mathematics. Regrettably, only 27% of the students eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government) achieved this important benchmark. The gap between the performance of disadvantaged students and all other students nationally is still very wide. Moreover, the gap in school between these children and their classmates is not closing fast enough.

The proportion of students who achieved good passes in all their subjects improved in 2015. There was stronger performance in some subjects such as science, hospitality, catering, food technology and health and social care. You have challenged appropriately the relevant exam boards about the accuracy of the marking in some subjects. You are waiting for the results of some re-marks to come through, because the students' outcomes were not as high as you expected. This is surprising because senior leaders made all reasonable endeavours to ensure that the forecasts of likely performance were robust and accurate. In English, for example, all

coursework was checked by other teachers locally before it was submitted. None was downgraded by examiners.

In the current year, you have continued to insist that all teachers set targets which are challenging. However, the targets inspectors saw in teachers' class data files, students' books and diaries and the academy's own information are not ambitious enough. The vast majority of students still enter the school needing to catch up. The rate of progress they are making typically is not sufficient to enable them to meet the expected standards by the end of Key Stage 4. Even the most-able students are set targets which, if achieved, would mean they had only made average progress. In general, girls continue to achieve more than boys. This is because lower- and middle-attaining boys, especially, settle for targets that are easily achievable. These boys do not stretch themselves and teachers do not routinely challenge them to do so. Consequently, the rate of progress over time is reflected in only very gradual improvements in performance.

Students who receive specific support when they have fallen behind with reading are increasingly doing well. Students who have behavioural and emotional difficulties are also provided with good-quality learning support so that their time in school is used well. Both the Phoenix Centre and the student centre make increasingly positive contributions to students' welfare and development. As a result, many make better progress and achieve more.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Teaching is improving constantly now. As a result, students are learning more and at a quicker pace. This is having a positive impact on the speed of improvement overall. Leaders are now setting minimum standards in a range of areas. For example, teachers now routinely provide time in lessons for students to correct mistakes in their work. Across the academy, any mistakes are noted with pink pens. Good work is marked in green. Students understand this system and like it. They say that it helps them to know what to improve and teachers' comments are helping them to know how to move on to the next step. Also, teachers are using a wider range of activities. The lead practitioners, a small group of effective teachers, are helping middle leaders to put these changes in place. Teachers are trying to make learning more exciting. They feel confident to do so because behaviour in lessons is better. In technology lessons, groups of students are learning to use a wide range of woodwork, engineering and baking skills through carefully designed practical tasks.

Teachers are keen now to have feedback on their work. The majority like to know when they have done well and also want to know their areas for improvement. More teachers than at my last visit are willing to improve their practice, and many continue to offer additional tuition to students outside normal working hours. The impact of the summer schools and revision classes is yet to be assessed fully.

Governors noted that all the effort did not result in dramatically improved results in 2015.

Most teachers are now matching the lessons to the changing requirements of the National Curriculum, the examination board specifications or syllabuses. However, sometimes they spend more time on the process of learning rather than helping students to acquire new knowledge, deepen understanding or practise skills. There is still not enough time given to help students to practise their writing. This was considered to be weak at the last full inspection and still needs to improve. Many students are articulate and possess good speaking skills (oracy), but they do not translate this into sustained pieces of lengthy writing.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Behaviour has improved considerably since the last full inspection. In particular, the behaviour of students on the Mill Road site is now consistently supportive of a better learning environment where students are safe and happy. The Salisbury Road site is now calm and orderly, including at lunchtime. Inspectors saw no poor conduct and only rare examples of students losing concentration in lessons or not responding straightaway to teachers. This is because the student services team is well led. Students know clearly what the consequences of poor behaviour will be as effective systems have been put in place to tackle it and to deal with any occasional, more serious incidents. Accurate notes of such incidents are recorded and stored securely. Leaders are becoming even more skilled at looking at information to identify any patterns or trends. This means they are able to act quickly to 'nip in the bud' any emerging issues. These improvements in behaviour are important because senior leaders are now able to spend less time patrolling the sites and more time on other vital aspects of their work.

This effective work has reduced by half the number of occasions when students are excluded. Leaders are also pursuing relentlessly ways to address and improve the poor attendance of some students. However, rates of absence remain too high overall. They are unacceptable in Year 10 and among those supported by the pupil premium.

You continue to ensure that all students are safe and secure at the academy. Students told inspectors that they feel safe. Key Stage 4 students also said that there is less bullying than previously. Younger students said that sometimes arguments from outside the academy come in, but teachers help to sort them out. All students commented that the academy provides plenty of opportunities for them to learn ways to stay safe online, on the roads and in relationships. They believe that the academy supports their personal development effectively. Older students provided good examples of how they have been helped to make the right choices about further education, opportunities for apprenticeships or traineeships and, for some, universities.

Students, on the whole, are increasingly well prepared for life in modern Britain. They develop appropriate attitudes and work well together. They say that there is no derogatory language and students are accepted generally for who they are. They accept the differences of others and are caring towards those who face challenges. Students celebrate each other's achievements and are pleased when their friends are successful. Some are making a strong contribution to the local community through charitable events like the 'Great Castle Bake Off'.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

You are continuing wisely to strengthen the leadership team. You have added an experienced teacher, responsible for leading improvements to teaching, learning and assessment. All leaders are enthusiastically supporting the introduction of the Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP). Inspectors saw immediate impact, as the vast majority of teachers had files of students' information available in their lessons. Inspectors also saw evidence of teachers sharing planning to improve the quality of their work and make best use of valuable time. You have reminded staff about the importance of regular feedback to students about their work. All work seen had been assessed in line with the academy's feedback policy.

You have insisted that all teachers follow these clear expectations and, as a result, teachers' work is much more consistent across the academy. Where teaching falls short of these basic expectations, you have acted swiftly to put appropriate challenge and support in place. Leaders are providing a range of training programmes to ensure that teaching continues to improve. Middle leaders, including the heads of English, mathematics, science and the humanities, are contributing extensively to this work. They feel valued by senior leaders and understand clearly their roles in the academy. This is necessary because there is still a high turnover of staff each term. New members of staff need to accept and understand the academy's and each department's expectations and procedures immediately, so that there is no break in the steadily improving quality of education provided. The academy has made a purposeful start to the current year.

You continue to lead the academy with unwavering passion and commitment. You hold your senior team and the rest of the staff to account robustly. You know everyone's strengths and limitations. You are increasingly aware of your own performance and effectiveness. You seek help when you need it and continue to build effective partnerships with those who can provide focused support. You are also aware of the need to reflect on those actions you have taken to evaluate those that have been most effective. At the beginning, everything needed fixing. Earlier in this letter, I noted some of those things that are well under way, such as improvements to students' behaviour and teachers' feedback. These were priorities and rightly received full attention. We discussed what had been most useful in securing these improvements. We also discussed the need to apply the same processes in a focused and coherent manner to the next set of priorities. All leaders

recognise the need to improve recruitment to the sixth form, the accuracy of forecasting students' performance, the robust negotiation of challenging targets for all students and the precise recording of information in tracking systems. All leaders agree that focus should not be lost where improvements have been made already.

### **External support**

SchoolsCompany Trust continues to provide good-quality, focused support for necessary improvements. Since the last monitoring inspection, better training programmes for teachers have been put in place. External advisors have also helped with improvements to senior leaders' management skills through personal coaching. The local authority also provides support by conducting regular and detailed reviews of leadership and teaching. The local authority's judgement of progress in the academy is accurate. The most recent report notes correctly the areas still requiring significant work. This confirms senior leaders' accurate identification of those areas of the academy's work which need to improve most rapidly, such as the achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs. The academy also receives specialist support from health and social care professionals. Strong partnerships exist with a range of outside agencies. These contribute well to keeping students safe in and out of the academy and with the particular challenge of reinforcing the importance of regular attendance.

### **In order to secure existing improvements and ensure further success, the following additional priority for further improvement is added.**

- Review, analyse and evaluate critically all leadership actions so far. What has worked well and what has been least effective in driving change and improvement?