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Mr Trevor Dunn
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr Dunn

Special measures monitoring inspection of Fyndoune Community College

Following my visit to your college on 14 October 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 college's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the college 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

This letter and the 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 Durham.

Yours sincerely

David Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently improve governance so that:
 - the college, working with the federation, has a clear, well-informed and ambitious vision and strategy for the education of all the young people in its care
 - college leaders are held to account for the quality of education in the college, especially of disadvantaged students, the most able and those with a disability and special educational needs
 - all policies meet requirements, are up-to-date and ratified by the governing body, especially those relating to the impact of pupil premium funding, the curriculum, the impact of Year 7 'catch-up' funding and the support offered to those students who are disabled and have special educational needs.

- Urgently improve the quality and impact of leadership and management, including that of special educational needs, by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders are capable of leading sustained improvement and challenge to all staff and this results in all students making rapid and sustained progress
 - establishing rigorous systems that accurately check and evaluate the college's work and ensure that the outcomes are consistently used by all leaders and managers, including middle leaders, to make rapid and sustained improvements
 - checking that disadvantaged students supported by the government's pupil premium funding receive high calibre support that underpins their progress.

- Improve behaviour across the college by:
 - urgently reviewing the role of the Inclusion Suite in the college's overall approach to behaviour
 - taking urgent steps to reduce the rise in persistent absence, especially that of disadvantaged students
 - making best use of the recently introduced rewards system, so that all students recognise the link between positive behaviour and good quality learning.

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that staff take full account of the learning needs of all students, especially the most able and those who are disadvantaged, when they are planning lessons and assessing students' progress
 - improving the consistency and quality of marking so that all students are clear about what they need to do to improve.

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 pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 14 October 2015

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, associate headteacher and other senior leaders, two members of the interim executive board (IEB) of governors, and a representative of the local authority. College documentation, including department reviews, attendance data and the single central record, which contains checks on the appointment of staff, was reviewed.

During this inspection, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) focused on the effectiveness of leadership and management and the outcomes for students at the college.

Context

Fyndoune Community College is part of a federation with a local secondary school. The chief executive of the college, who had been on long-term absence, has now left the college. An acting headteacher has oversight of the two colleges with a head of college taking responsibility for the day-to-day work of each. The governing body has been replaced by an IEB and a part-time associate headteacher has been appointed by the local authority to support leadership within the college. A major restructuring of the senior leadership team of the two colleges in the federation took effect in September. A deputy headteacher responsible for teaching and learning has been appointed and will take up post in January.

Plans for the college to become an academy are under consideration.

Outcomes for pupils

The provisional 2015 examination results show that the proportion of students achieving five GCSE qualifications including English and mathematics at grades A* to C has declined for a third consecutive year. A significant reason for these weak overall results is that only 47% of students made the progress expected of them in English, a substantial decline of 25% from the previous year. Students' achievement in mathematics also declined compared with the 2014 results, with a 7% fall in the proportion making expected progress. There was some narrowing of gaps between students supported by the pupil premium funding and their classmates but this was not consistent.

There are some green shoots of improvement, most notably in the progress of students in science, English literature, design technology, history and French, but these improvements are from a very low starting point. Achievement across the college is very inconsistent with students in some subjects performing better than in others and some year groups making better progress than others. The legacy of

poor teaching over time, along with teachers' historically inaccurate predictions of students' performance, has highlighted to college leaders the deep and endemic issues afflicting the college and the major challenges that lie ahead to improve matters. There is an urgent need to ensure that students in all classes are taught well so that they make at least the progress expected of them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching was not a focus of this inspection. A deputy headteacher responsible for teaching and learning has been appointed and will be in position at the time of the next monitoring inspection.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The college has recently appointed an attendance officer. The awareness of the importance of good attendance among students has been raised throughout the college. Parents of absent students are contacted promptly on the first day of absence by telephone or text, and the college has worked with students and their parents on an individual basis to offer targeted support to improve attendance where appropriate. Rates of attendance have continued to improve and persistent absence, particularly that of disadvantaged students, is declining.

The work of the Inclusion Suite is now more closely aligned to the college curriculum. Teachers produce work for students which is matched to that in the lessons they miss. This, together with more effective support in this area, has reduced the rate of fixed-term exclusions from the college and the numbers of students who spend time in the suite is falling.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

A part-time associate headteacher has been appointed to provide further support to the acting headteacher and middle leaders in both colleges of the federation. A national leader of education (NLE) and local authority officers continue to provide additional extensive support to the college.

All middle leaders are now linked with a member of the recently restructured senior leadership team. The associate headteacher has led a review of each department and ensured that middle leaders now fully understand their roles and what is expected of them. Middle leaders have produced a detailed analysis of recent student outcomes in their subject area and have updated department development plans. Middle leaders confirm that they are receiving more effective support and are now clear about their positions and what is expected of them. They now believe that they have the support and challenge required to take responsibility for their roles. However, they need to develop further their skills in monitoring the quality and

impact of the teaching for which they are responsible. This work is hampered by a lack of coordination between teachers in the two colleges in some subject areas.

The college has developed a more robust system for collecting and analysing information about students' progress. Students in Years 10 and 11 sit formal examinations twice each year and these are marked by teachers and the papers moderated by local authority officers. More accurate information allows middle leaders and teachers to intervene rapidly where underperformance is noted, whether with individual students or with different groups of students.

Members of the IEB have continued to support and challenge college leaders. The federation scrutiny group must continue to focus on strategies to improve the quality of teaching and to address areas of stubborn underachievement.

External support

The local authority has provided further support for the leadership of the federation through the appointment of a part-time associate headteacher. Local authority officers have continued to work with middle leaders to develop their leadership skills. The federation scrutiny group, including the associate headteacher, the NLE, representatives of the local authority and college governors, meets regularly to support and challenge senior leaders.