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Mrs Sally Cox
Principal
Wigston College
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Leicestershire
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Dear Mrs Cox

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wigston College

Following my visit with John Edwards, Ofsted Inspector, and Tracey Ydlibi, Ofsted Inspector, to the school on 26 and 27 April 2016, 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 that 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 that took place in April 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in April 2015

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in Years 10 and 11, so that it is at least good by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan lessons with sufficient challenge for different groups of students, particularly those with special educational needs, and those who are disadvantaged
 - ensure that expectations for behaviour are clear, codes of conduct are used and activities engage students in their learning
 - assess work accurately and use this information effectively to plan the next steps that students need to take in their learning
 - insist on high standards of presentation, that students take sufficient care over their work and regularly do their best
 - ensure that students act upon the feedback they receive so they develop their skills and understanding.

- Raise achievement across the college, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring all teachers have the highest expectation for what different groups of students are able to achieve
 - developing a more consistent approach across all subjects to improving students' literacy and numeracy skills
 - improving the rate of completion and retention for sixth form courses
 - improving the identification of the individual needs of disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs in order to ensure they receive more effective support, including from teaching assistants.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - fewer students fall behind and require extra tuition in order to catch up
 - strategies for use of extra government funding to support disadvantaged students are effective in that these pupils are helped to make at least good progress
 - governors are more active in monitoring the school, in checking that agreed actions have the intended impact and providing effective challenge and support for school leaders
 - the arrangements made to educate some students off site for all, or part of the week, are checked regularly to ensure students are safe.

- Improve the management of behaviour and safety by ensuring that:
 - all staff regularly insist on high standards of behaviour, especially for those who find it difficult to comply, by making effective use of the college's behaviour code in lessons and around the site

- lateness to lessons is consistently and effectively challenged
- strategies to improve attendance focus on those with low attendance and that codes for recording absence are used accurately
- students accessing alternative provision are attending regularly.

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 April 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you and other senior leaders, groups of middle leaders, representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, representatives from the trust, including the executive headteacher, and groups of pupils. I held a telephone discussion with the newly appointed executive headteacher, due to take up post on 1 August 2016. One inspector spoke with the providers of alternative provision used by the school and a small sample of employers who provide work experience for Year 10 pupils. The large majority of Year 10 pupils were participating in work experience during the inspection and were consequently not in school. Inspectors observed learning in 23 lessons.

Context

The school is currently undergoing significant changes to its leadership and management arrangements and organisation. You and the executive headteacher are retiring at the end of the current academic year. Two deputy principals and a range of other staff are also leaving the school. A new executive headteacher has been appointed and will take up his post on 1 August 2016. Plans are in place for the imminent appointment of a new head of school together with other senior leaders. From September 2016, the school will no longer admit pupils in Year 10 and from September 2017, will provide sixth form education only. The school timetable is being restructured to align with the timetable of Wigston Academy. This will result in teachers from the trust teaching in both schools from September 2016.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You and your team have continued to secure improvements to the quality of education provided by the school despite significant challenges, including the need for reductions in staffing. You, the executive headteacher and trustees are putting in place well-considered plans to secure the long-term future of the school, including through the restructuring of its leadership and management arrangements, while maintaining a clear and effective focus on improving outcomes for the pupils currently on role. You have maintained teachers' morale and their determination to do all they can to improve outcomes for pupils in spite of impending cuts to staffing.

At the last monitoring inspection the school's assessment information was not accurate enough to give a clear picture of how well pupils in each year group and across all subjects were achieving. New systems were being implemented to remedy this. These have proved to be highly effective. The school's management of

pupils' performance information is now much more secure and enables you, other staff and governors to assess, accurately, how well pupils are achieving across the curriculum. This improvement is playing a vital role in helping you and other leaders to keep a close eye on the progress pupils are making. In addition, the information presented is far more robust than before. In light of some inflated predictions of examination outcomes in the last academic year, you have added much more rigour to the way in which teachers assess pupils' progress. Rather than relying on forecasts, which previously was the case, you now ensure that the data used to assess pupils' ongoing achievement is rooted in accurate appraisal of their current attainment. For example, the assessment data collated in February for pupils in Years 11, 12 and 13 and sixth form students was based entirely on their performance in the January mock examinations and validated results from pupils' controlled assessments. This has resulted in a much more realistic view of pupils' likely outcomes in their forthcoming public examinations. In addition, you have made sure that teachers' marking of examination papers is accurate through an extensive range of quality assurance, including through moderation with staff from other schools and support from experienced examiners and specialist leaders of education. The information has sharpened teachers' and pupils' understanding of where, precisely, pupils need additional teaching and support to help remedy evident weaknesses. It has also strengthened the accuracy of leaders' and governors' evaluation of the quality and impact of the school's work, particularly with regard to outcomes for pupils and pupils' behaviour and welfare. Nevertheless, while teaching is improving, inspectors judge that leaders' assessment of the quality of teaching remains, at this time, overly-optimistic. This is because evaluations are not well enough informed by analysis of the quality of teaching where lessons are taught by staff teaching other than in their specialist subject.

Improvements to the quality of teaching and the standards of pupils' behaviour are resulting in growing parental confidence in the school. While there were too few responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, to warrant scrutiny during the monitoring inspection, the school's own surveys of parents' views show marked improvements in their perceptions of the school's work. This includes through the survey taken in January which reflects the views of 163 parents. Some parents rightly remain concerned about turbulence in staffing, which has resulted in some pupils receiving poor teaching, particularly in mathematics. You have taken robust action to tackle the weakest mathematics teaching and have put in place interim arrangements to help boost the achievement of the pupils affected, including through brokering teaching from across the trust. Nevertheless, pupils' achievement in mathematics, particularly in Year 10, continues to be inhibited by the school's difficulties in recruiting strong, permanent teachers of mathematics.

Pupils' perceptions about the school are also more positive than before. They know that improvements still need to be made, for example, to ensure greater consistency in teaching quality and to reduce further the decreasing incidence of low-level disruption. However, all of the pupils who inspectors spoke with could identify how the school is improving. In discussions, the large majority of pupils said

they would now recommend the school where previously, they said, they wouldn't have. Pupils' growing confidence in the school is also reflected in the much higher proportion of Year 11 pupils who have signalled their intention to remain at the school for post-16 education than seen in recent years. Results from your own surveys of pupils' views are increasingly positive.

You and other leaders are receiving increasingly effective support and challenge from the local governing body. The findings of the highly meticulous external review of governance, conducted by a representative of the National Governors Association, have helped governors and trustees to identify how they can provide more effective support and challenge to the school's leadership team. This has resulted in clearer understanding of the different roles of the local governing body and the multi-academy trust. The full findings of the review are now being implemented and are beginning to result in greater challenge from governors and are ensuring that governors monitor the school's progress more strategically.

The school's improvement is also now supported by an effective school improvement plan. The plan has been amended to ensure that the intended actions to improve the school are accompanied by clear specific timelines, clear lines of accountability and measurable success criteria. Leaders acknowledged, however, during the inspection, that the intended strategies to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are not included in the school improvement plan and this needs to be remedied quickly so that the effectiveness of the actions being taken to improve this aspect of teaching can be effectively evaluated by leaders and governors.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The effective leadership of teaching has continued to secure improvements to teaching quality though inconsistencies remain. You know, for example, that some pupils have been adversely affected by poor teaching in mathematics, particularly in Year 10 and, as a result, those affected are not making the progress they should.

The Year 11, 12 and 13 pupils who met with inspectors said they were being prepared well for most of their forthcoming examinations. Certainly, the improved assessment arrangements have strengthened pupils' awareness of what they need to do to remedy any weaknesses in their knowledge, skills and understanding in many, though not all, of their subjects. However, observations of learning during the monitoring inspection indicated that some Year 11 pupils are not well enough prepared for their examinations, for example in history and in philosophy and ethics.

In the majority of the lessons observed, teachers were seen to be making good use of assessment information and examination criteria to help prepare pupils for their summer examinations. In mathematics, Year 11 pupils complete a past examination paper each week. Detailed analysis by the subject leader and his staff is enabling them to target the teaching of specific topics where they are most needed, including

through additional teaching provided through the trust. Similar levels of ongoing analysis are happening in English. Subject leaders and teachers are rightly focused on doing all they can to raise pupils' achievement, including the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability. This includes through a comprehensive range of additional teaching, interventions and extra revision classes. You know that in the longer term, the school must ensure that pupils receive more teaching of high quality over a sustained period of time so that this level of intervention can be reduced. Nevertheless, at this stage in the school's journey, and in the run up to public examinations, the additional support being provided is both necessary and appropriate.

There is undoubtedly some strong teaching at the school and the proportion of inadequate teaching has reduced significantly. Inspectors judge that, at this time, teaching is more consistently effective in the sixth form than in key stage 4. This is because nearly all sixth form teaching is delivered by subject specialists whereas a significant minority of teaching in key stage 4 is delivered by staff working out of their specialist subject. While teachers' awareness of the specific needs of disadvantaged pupils has increased, not all teachers target support where it is most needed quickly enough. This reduces the impact of the otherwise excellent support provided by the pupil premium champions. Similarly, teaching assistants are not consistently deployed well enough to ensure they make enough difference to pupils' learning.

Teachers' marking of pupils' work is most commonly detailed and helpful and enables pupils to identify the steps they need to take to raise their attainment. Some inconsistencies remain, however, and the strong marking and feedback seen in the mathematics classes taught by permanent staff, English and in most science classes is not seen everywhere. Teachers are increasingly mindful of their responsibilities to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and have received training in how this can be achieved. Nevertheless, strategies remain ad hoc and dependent on the skills of individual teachers because the school's revised literacy and numeracy policies have yet to be implemented.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inspectors observed consistently good behaviour during the monitoring inspection. The school's surveys show that increased proportions of pupils and their parents judge the school's management of pupils' behaviour to be good. In discussions with inspectors, pupils could identify how and why behaviour is improving but also reported that behaviour is not yet good in all lessons. You have taken firm action to tackle the poorest behaviour including through fixed term exclusions and in extreme circumstances, permanent exclusions. The revised and simplified behaviour management system is increasingly well embedded and effective. The school's records show that the incidence of low-level disruption is reducing and that more pupils are now earning rewards for their good behaviour, attendance and achievement. Some Year 11 pupils do not wear their uniforms smartly enough and

standards in this regard have slipped since the previous monitoring visit.

The school's records show that incidents of bullying have reduced and all pupils who spoke with inspectors said they feel safe at the school. They know that strong action will be taken if pupils use derogatory language towards one another, for example with regard to ethnicity or sexuality.

The school's procedures for ensuring that pupils who attend alternative provision are safe and attend regularly continue to be strong, as reported at the first monitoring inspection. Strong procedures are also in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe while on work experience; these arrangements are well understood by all parties.

Pupils' punctuality to school and to lessons has improved markedly and now, most pupils arrive to school and lessons on time. The decision to keep all pupils on-site at lunchtime continues to have a positive impact on pupils' attendance and punctuality to lessons in the afternoon. You continue to monitor attendance very closely and take firm action where pupils are not attending regularly enough. This policy includes the issuing of penalty notices for unauthorised holiday absences and legal action where pupils are persistently absent. You have set a high threshold for intervention and the parents of pupils whose attendance dips below 94% are contacted by letter with firmer action taken where the pupils' attendance does not get better. As a result, attendance continues to improve and is more closely aligned with the national average for secondary schools. While the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is also improving, it remains lower than for other pupils at the school. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is also reducing but remains too high.

Outcomes for pupils

The school's assessment information, now far more robust than before, shows that pupils are achieving increasingly well, though this is not consistent in all subjects in all years. For example, in the January mock examinations, 45% of pupils achieved five GCSE grades at A* to C. This is similar to the proportion of pupils who achieved this measure at the end of their courses last year. While this provides no guarantee of improvements in this summer's examinations, the robust approach to assessing pupils' achievement, including through external quality assurance, enables senior staff to be more confident that last year's results will be surpassed. School data shows that gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are beginning to narrow though not yet rapidly or consistently enough. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability remains uneven.

Notable improvements are evident in students' achievement in the sixth form, particularly in Year 12. For example, results from the school's trial examinations in January show that pupils are achieving well as they prepare for their AS level examinations in a wide range of subjects, including in English, mathematics and

science and in other subjects such as history, media studies and physical education (PE). If students achieve as well in their final examinations, this will represent considerable improvement on the 2015 results. Achievement at A2 is also improving though some weaknesses remain, for example in mathematics, information and communications technology (ICT) and health and social care. Nevertheless, the school's data suggests that attainment at the higher grades at both AS and A level will rise overall this year.

Retention in the sixth form has improved and is similar to previously published national data. This is a result of the improved information, advice and guidance that students received as they selected their courses as well as improvements to the quality of teaching in the sixth form. All of the, albeit, small minority of pupils who did not complete their studies in Year 12 secured apprenticeships with local employers. Sixth form leaders are ensuring that the school is compliant with the statutory post-16 programmes of study, including by ensuring that students who did not attain a grade C or above in English or mathematics in Year 11 last year, resit these subjects. Current performance information shows that while a small minority have already secured a grade C or above in English, achievement on these courses is inconsistent.

External support

The school continues to benefit from effective support from the Wigston Academies Trust. The benefit results in part from the trust's strategic planning for the long-term future of the school, which involves significant changes to the school's leadership and management arrangements and organisation of the curriculum, scheduled for implementation by the start of the next academic year. The school also receives operational support from the trust with regard to human resources, information technology, human resources and financial management. In addition, trustees are playing a key role in monitoring the views of pupils and parents. Crucially, the trust has also brokered support from teachers from Wigston Academy and other schools to help raise achievement, including in English and mathematics.

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, trustees have now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose. The statement now meets requirements and has been strengthened through clearer identification of which actions will be taken, when and by whom and success criteria which indicate how success will be evaluated. However, the statement of action does not give enough attention to how literacy and numeracy provision across the school will be strengthened.

The school is also receiving effective support from a range of local leaders of education and specialist leaders of education to moderate assessments and improve the quality of teaching.