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3 June 2016

Mrs Kathy Hocking
Acting Principal
Callington Community College
Launceston Road
Callington
Cornwall
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Dear Mrs Hocking

Special measures monitoring inspection of Callington Community College

Following my visit with Iain Freeland, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Justine Hocking, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 17–18 May 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 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 that took place in March 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.

Having considered all the evidence, I recommend that the school may seek to appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection (no more than two, and to different subject departments).

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently improve the quality of governance at the college by ensuring that governors:
 - take immediate action to carry out their statutory duties with regard to monitoring and evaluating the quality of safeguarding practice across the college
 - rigorously challenge leaders to improve the college's performance
 - immediately implement recommendations from the external review of governance.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring:
 - middle leaders rigorously monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and achievement in their departments
 - students further develop their understanding of people from different faiths and backgrounds in modern Britain.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring teachers:
 - use information on students' attainment to plan learning which appropriately supports and challenges them
 - check students' learning during lessons and adapt their teaching to accelerate the progress students make
 - demand high-quality presentation of work from all students
 - provide students with effective feedback so that they know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve
 - ensure students improve their work as a result of the feedback provided.
- Raise achievement by ensuring that teachers:
 - have the highest expectations of what students are able to achieve
 - develop a consistent approach to improving students' literacy and numeracy skills across subjects.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 17–18 May 2016

Evidence

During the inspection, inspectors met with the acting principal and with other members of the college's leadership team. The lead inspector met with two governors, including the chair of the governing board. He also met with the principal of Ivybridge Community College, who is also the chief executive officer of Ivybridge Academy Trust, which is supporting the college. Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils and students from all year groups and talked with other pupils at various times in lessons and around the college. A telephone conversation was held with the local authority designated officer for safeguarding.

Inspectors looked at teaching and learning in a range of lessons, where they also looked at pupils' work and talked with them about their learning. Almost all visits to lessons were carried out with members of the college's leadership team. Inspectors looked at college documentation, including minutes of the governing board and reports from governors' monitoring visits to the school. They scrutinised information about safety and safeguarding, including the single central record of staff recruitment. Inspectors looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and discussed with leaders and staff how the college works to keep pupils safe, particularly those pupils who may be vulnerable.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the principal of the college has announced his intention to retire at the end of the summer term and has tendered his resignation. In his absence, an acting principal has been appointed until September 2016, and subsequently as interim principal until a permanent appointment is made. The college is in the process of restructuring staffing, including the leadership team, teaching and support staff. Two new governors have been appointed to the governing board.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Following the principal's decision to retire, the governing board and the incoming sponsor acted swiftly and decisively to secure the leadership of the college. The acting principal has quickly understood the significant challenges the college faces. She has won the support of staff and this has helped to improve confidence and morale. The acting principal has rightly recognised the need to ensure that members of the leadership team have the skills, direction and accountability they need to lead their areas of responsibility more effectively. She, along with leaders and governors, has begun to tackle some of the most important issues facing the college. Consequently, this inspection judges leaders and governors to be taking effective action.

After the previous monitoring inspection, leaders ensured that basic expectations of behaviour, respect and safety were established. They are working hard to make sure that all members of the college community meet these expectations consistently. This has brought about much-needed improvements to the ethos and culture of the college. Leaders and governors are now making time to listen to the views of pupils and students, and taking greater account of their concerns and opinions.

Leaders have a broadly accurate overview of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching across the college. Where teaching is in need of urgent improvement, leaders' actions are tackling this effectively. However, these checks on teaching are not yet bringing about more widespread improvement across the college. This is because the balance between checking the quality of teaching and actions taken to improve it is not right. For example, while curriculum leaders enjoy a degree of autonomy, this contributes to leaders' inconsistency of expectations on staff. Leaders' regular checks on pupils' work, for example, focus more on whether teachers are keeping up with their marking than on the quality of the curriculum or on whether pupils are making good progress over time.

Leaders are developing a more effective model for the curriculum and assessment, but it is too early to see signs of impact. Curriculum leaders have started to consider how teaching plans can be improved to help all pupils make better progress but leadership of curriculum development at a whole-school level remains weak. For example, although useful work is being done to check the ways in which the curriculum contributes to pupils' personal, social and emotional development, this is not yet leading to significant improvements in how the curriculum meets pupils' needs.

Leaders have responded to concerns identified at the previous monitoring inspection about the quality of records kept about behaviour, welfare and safeguarding. They now have better information about concerns arising from different sources, such as patterns in pupils' attendance, behaviour incidents or referrals from staff. There is also more open dialogue between the local authority and the college's safeguarding team. As well, governors are providing more effective oversight and challenge for safeguarding, pupils' safety and welfare. However, although leaders now have access to better information, they are not yet using this well enough to evaluate the effectiveness of provision and how it could be improved.

The quality of governance continues to improve. Governors are now more proactive in their approach, and have increased their first-hand understanding of the college's work. They are now asking for information about school performance in a format that they can interrogate and understand more clearly. They are more frequently cross-checking leaders' views on the impact of actions taken, and considering pupils' opinions and concerns. They recognise the importance of the college improving its

communication with key stakeholders. Nevertheless, there is more to do for governors to understand the quality of teaching and what is being done to improve it.

Outcomes for pupils

Overall levels of achievement across the college remain broadly average, including in the sixth form. The college's assessment information indicates that 'headline' performance for Year 11 is on track to rise this year in comparison with examination results in 2015. Leaders have greater confidence in their predictions because they are better at checking the reliability and accuracy of assessment, and because of results from examinations already taken by pupils when they were in Year 10.

However, the progress of different groups of pupils continues to vary significantly. For example, college assessment information indicates that some pupils who have special educational needs or disability are now making better progress. Some of these pupils also say they feel happier and safer around college, and this is having a positive impact on their attitudes to college and their learning. The care and support provided for those pupils with more profound needs is an important factor in this. Conversely, there is not enough focus on the academic achievement of pupils identified as 'SEN support' (pupils needing a lower level of support for special educational needs or disability). Learning is rarely adapted effectively to help them to make faster progress.

Similarly, leaders are not tackling the underperformance of disadvantaged pupils quickly enough, or identifying how additional funding should be used to best effect. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are not making enough progress. For example, in Year 11, the differences in the achievement of this group of pupils and their peers has widened slightly since the previous monitoring inspection. By contrast, support provided for pupils with weak reading skills has had a positive impact on some disadvantaged pupils in younger year groups.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Since the previous monitoring inspection, more teachers are taking part in training programmes and collaborating with staff from the partner school, Ivybridge Community College. This has led to a more open dialogue about teaching and staff are now more reflective and evaluative about their practice. Teachers now have better-quality information about pupils who are falling behind. However, there is considerable variation in how well teachers use assessment information to address gaps in pupils' learning.

Where pupils learn well, they are fully involved in their learning. Through discussion and feedback in lessons, teachers identify where pupils need help to overcome errors and misconceptions. Progress is swift where expectations are high for all groups of pupils. Teaching makes sure that all pupils can access the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to build firm foundations for future learning. In art and design, for example, the many displays of high-quality work serve to motivate and inspire pupils. Teaching in this subject makes sure that pupils understand how to produce the best-quality work that they can.

Learning slows where the focus is on tasks to be completed, rather than learning to be developed. The most able pupils sometimes spend too long completing work that is too easy, or which does not demand deeper thinking. For example, much of what is given as 'extension' simply provides more work in a similar vein, rather than expecting pupils to apply their skills and knowledge to new concepts, situations or problems. Not enough teaching involves pupils in reasoning and justifying their ideas and approaches. The impact of teaching on pupils' personal, social and emotional development remains weak. Pupils say that teachers are sometimes reluctant to discuss or explore issues that arise during classroom discussions. The poor state of repair of some parts of the college buildings contributes to a learning environment that does little to encourage respect or aspiration.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils say behaviour has improved in lessons and around the college. Staff are more vigilant and consistent in the way they apply the new behaviour policy. Younger pupils say they feel less anxious around the college site, and as they move from lesson to lesson. Examples of antisocial behaviour from some pupils, such as pushing and shoving or swearing, are now much less evident. Pupils say that staff are more likely to challenge poor behaviour and take a firm line in response. Pupils are no longer sent out of lessons and left to wander the college, and senior staff are much more visible in corridors and classrooms. However, there remains more to do in this regard because pupils say these improvements are not happening in all their lessons and at all times around the college. A small number of pupils responding to the online survey said they felt they do not have an adult they can turn to if they have any concerns, including about bullying.

Fixed-term exclusions from the college have also declined and there have been no permanent exclusions. However, a significant proportion of the exclusions that have happened are the result of the behaviour of pupils who attend alternative provision. Leaders have not checked the quality of this provision carefully enough to make sure that it is effective in meeting pupils' needs.

Better use of tutor time is helping to build more effective relationships between staff and pupils, and it is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour, attendance and punctuality. However, these sessions are not yet being used consistently well to support pupils' personal development and welfare, nor as opportunities for pupils to discuss, reflect and develop an understanding of different faiths, cultures and contemporary issues.

The quality of advice and guidance about careers is variable. In the sixth form, students receive helpful advice about future choices, particularly for higher education. Support for disadvantaged students in the sixth form, including applications for university, is often carefully tailored to their needs. However, some pupils in younger year groups say they do not get the information they need or enough guidance about the choices they have. One third of the pupils responding to the online survey felt the college could do more to help them with future options and pathways.

Staff work hard to help pupils with special educational needs or disability attend regularly and their attendance is improving. However, overall attendance remains broadly average, and the difference between the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers is not closing quickly enough. Leaders are not yet using information about pupils' attendance and punctuality strategically to plan improvements.

External support

The college continues to work with the support of Ivybridge Community College. Since the previous monitoring inspection, this support has begun to have greater impact. The current acting principal was seconded from Ivybridge in January 2016, before taking up her role earlier this month. Ivybridge has also provided valuable support for human resources and is working with the college on financial matters. This partnership also includes joint training events for teachers, and links between the mathematics, science and modern foreign languages departments with a focus on curriculum development.