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8 June 2017

Mr Alastair McKenzie
Principal
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Dear Mr McKenzie

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kings College Guildford

Following my visit to your school on 23 and 24 May 2017, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in December 2016.

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.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint NQTs.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Moles
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2016.

- Increase the impact of leadership and management by:
 - improving the accuracy of self-evaluation so that it focuses rigorously on the impact of the school's work on pupils' progress in all year groups
 - ensuring that improvement plans have clear targets and success criteria that can be measured at certain points in the year so that governors and leaders can monitor progress more accurately
 - holding teachers to account for pupils' achievement in all key stages
 - ensuring that governors use a wider range of information on which to challenge leaders on outcomes for pupils in all year groups
 - ensuring that oversight provided by the sponsoring trust is sharply focused on outcomes, in particular in English and science and for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and boys.
- Urgently improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and boys by:
 - ensuring that work in lessons is appropriately challenging for them
 - making regular and accurate checks on how well they are doing
 - monitoring the impact of the pupil premium grant on disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment regularly, rigorously and against other pupils nationally
 - ensuring that their attendance rates at least match national averages for all pupils.
- Improve outcomes in English and science so that rates of achievement at least match national averages by ensuring that teaching:
 - creates a culture that actively promotes a love of reading
 - improves pupils' progress in key stage 3, so that they are well prepared for their GCSE courses.
- Improve behaviour by:
 - eliminating low-level disruption in lessons
 - ensuring that pupils conduct themselves well in corridors and playgrounds, and that they do not use homophobic or derogatory language.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 23 to 24 May 2017

Evidence

The inspector met with the principal, other senior and middle leaders, a newly qualified teacher and a group of pupils from Years 8, 10 and 12. She also met with the chair and another member of the executive working group (EWG), which fulfils the role of local governance, and two representatives from the Guildford Education Partnership Trust. She visited 15 lessons across a range of subjects alongside the principal, the vice-principal and an assistant principal. The inspector carried out a work scrutiny with two members of the senior leadership team. She also considered a range of documents, including the school's statement of action, records of the school's recruitment checks on staff and current information about pupils' performance, behaviour and attendance.

Context

Since the last inspection, the governing body is no longer in place. The EWG was formed in its place during March 2017. Three teachers have left and one has joined the school. Senior leadership roles have been reviewed and revised. The University of Surrey link worker, who had only just taken up her post at the time of the last inspection, is now established in her role.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders are determined to improve the school quickly. They have taken useful first steps to address the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. They are honest in their reflections of the progress that has been achieved so far and understand the urgency of the priorities moving forward. Senior leaders' roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and refined in order to enable them to be more focused and effective in their work. Working within considerable staffing and funding constraints, leaders remain ambitious to improve the quality of provision for their pupils. Staff across the school are equally committed to this goal and contribute well to the journey of improvement.

With the support of the trust, leaders have prepared a statement of action which provides the momentum necessary to achieve rapid improvement across the school. The plan identifies appropriate actions against an ambitious timescale, and includes helpful criteria against which progress can be measured. At this early stage, leaders are largely on track with the actions they have planned to undertake, but some actions are too recent for the impact they have had on pupils' achievements to be seen.

The members of the EWG bring considerable expertise and experience that equip them well for the role. They have set about their work with vigour, demonstrating

high expectations for school leaders and their work. Their approach to monitoring the impact of leaders' actions is systematic and evidence-based. This enables them to hold school leaders to account effectively. At the time of this monitoring visit, the EWG has only been in place for a number of weeks, so it is too soon to be able to see the measurable impact of its work.

The vice-principal took on responsibility for pupil premium funding in January 2017. A prompt evaluation of how effectively funding was used has identified clear and helpful actions to improve the impact of spending on pupils' achievement. Staff across the school now have an improved awareness of the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils in their classes have. Teachers are expected to plan appropriately to meet disadvantaged pupils' needs and raise their aspirations. A recent external review of pupil premium spending commissioned by the trust identifies that strong systems are now in place to support the ongoing development of the use of the pupil premium. This has the potential to accelerate disadvantaged pupils' progress and improve their achievement over time, but will need ongoing and careful monitoring as actions become embedded.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has carried out a careful review of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Her team members have utilised opportunities to engage in a wide range of training to ensure that they are suitably skilled to meet the range of needs within the school. The SENCo is currently reviewing the special educational needs register to check that pupils' specific needs are clearly understood. This will ensure that appropriate extra help is directed towards those who need to catch up and achieve in line with pupils nationally.

After the last inspection, leaders rightly identified that establishing high expectations and improving behaviour would be important first steps in improving the quality of provision. As such, they have taken effective action towards achieving these goals. However, leaders recognise that their work to develop the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment is not as well developed at this stage. Initial work has been carried out to refocus staff on the difference their actions make to pupils' outcomes. A group of staff has done some early research to explore how to improve the effectiveness of teaching, through visiting other schools within the trust. During the latter part of the summer term, it will be vital for leaders to ensure that they share what they have learned successfully across the wider staff. They need to put in place a consistently effective approach to teaching, learning and assessment ready for the start of the autumn term.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders identify accurately that the quality of teaching remains variable across the school. This was evident from learning walks carried out during the monitoring visit and from a review of pupils' work across a range of subjects. During visits to lessons, the atmosphere in most classrooms was calm and purposeful. Where this

was not the case, it was because learning activities did not meet pupils' needs or challenge them sufficiently. The positive learning environment helped pupils to focus on the learning activities teachers had planned for them. In some lessons, particularly in English and history, teachers' high expectations for learning and progress were evident in the challenging work that pupils were undertaking. This was helping them to make good progress. In other lessons, expectations were lower and this slowed the pace of learning.

Teachers have adopted a consistent approach to the information they have about the pupils that they teach. Learning passports have been introduced for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This ensures that teachers know pupils well and understand barriers that may impede their progress. The 'five things' initiative encourages teachers to focus on the pupils in their class who most need extra help in order to accelerate their progress. Although teachers now have a wealth of information about their pupils' needs, they do not currently use what they know consistently well to plan future learning. This means that work in lessons is not closely matched to the prior learning or needs of the different groups of learners in the class. As a result, some groups of pupils do not make the rapid progress they need to in order to achieve well by the end of Year 11.

The quality of work that pupils produce is highly variable from subject to subject and year to year. In some subject areas, pupils take pride in their work. They make good progress over time as a result of well-structured tasks and effective feedback from their teacher, which they act on routinely. However, in other subjects, work lacks care and detail, and basic errors or misconceptions are not addressed or resolved. Expectations about the quality of pupils' work are not consistent across subjects.

Leaders have taken appropriate action to raise the profile of literacy across the school. The literacy coordinator has introduced more challenging texts into the English curriculum from Year 7, in order to provide pupils with regular opportunities to engage with a range of literature. Across the school, leaders have introduced a weekly reading session which pupils and staff are expected to participate in. Volunteers from the University of Surrey and students from the sixth form support those pupils who struggle to engage with reading or who find reading difficult. The literacy coordinator recognises that the library is an underutilised resource and is keen to develop it further, but does not currently have clear plans as to how this could be achieved. The SENCo is about to embark on a more systematic review of pupils' reading and spelling ages, so that extra help can be directed more carefully to support those who most need to improve their literacy skills. This will also help leaders to evaluate more accurately the difference this extra help makes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Since the inspection in December 2016, leaders' most significant action has been to improve pupils' behaviour. Leaders recognised that, in order for pupils to be receptive to learning, their behaviour and attitudes needed to improve quickly. Leaders have focused on ensuring that instances of poor behaviour are managed effectively through the introduction of seven basic rules for behaviour. Staff have been supported and challenged where necessary to ensure that these rules are applied consistently. As a result, pupils and staff report that behaviour around the school has improved greatly. The atmosphere around the school is generally calm and purposeful. Staff manage incidents of disruptive behaviour well. Pupils appreciate how this has improved their learning environment, although some pupils do not currently behave consistently well in lessons. Pupils particularly value the improved atmosphere in the social spaces around school at brunchtime and lunchtime.

As expectations for pupils' behaviour increased, the number of behavioural incidents being recorded in school initially rose dramatically. The number of fixed-term exclusions also increased, as sanctions have been followed through where necessary. As pupils adjust to teachers' more consistent management of their behaviour, the number of behavioural incidents and fixed-term exclusions are beginning to reduce, but they remain high.

From January 2017, leaders have introduced a new strategy to improve pupils' attendance. Short-term targets are leading to some initial improvements in attendance, but not dramatically so at this point. Attendance remains below the national average and is particularly low for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school remains very high. Leaders' recently introduced parent partnership intervention programme is helping to engage families of pupils who are frequently absent from school. As yet, it has not led to a rapid reduction in the percentage of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

Outcomes for pupils

Assessment systems which were newly in place at the time of the last inspection are now established. Staff use them confidently to assess accurately how well pupils are achieving, working with colleagues from across the trust to check that their judgements are reliable. As a result, leaders have confidence in teachers' assessments of how well pupils are achieving.

For pupils currently in Year 11, outcomes remain below the national average. The percentage of pupils set to achieve at least a grade 4 in English and mathematics by the end of the academic year is similar to the proportions achieving the equivalent standard in school in 2016. This means that, although they are making better progress from starting points typically lower than for Year 11 last year, their

attainment remains well below the national average. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making more rapid progress than their peers in school. By comparison, boys and the most able are making less progress over time. Validated GCSE predictions indicate that outcomes across a number of subjects by the end of Year 11 are set to be well below the national average. However, more pupils are achieving qualifications across a broad range of academic subjects than has been the case in the past.

Across other year groups, pupils are making good and increasingly rapid progress in English. However, the proportion attaining standards typical for their age in Year 8 is well below what might be expected. Progress in mathematics and science is less rapid, and relatively low proportions of pupils in Years 7 to 10 are currently working close to or in line with their targets. Typically, disadvantaged pupils are not making the accelerated progress that is needed for them to catch up and achieve in line with other pupils nationally. Similarly, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, while making expected in-year progress in some subjects, are not making rapid progress consistently across the curriculum.

In summary, although there are some indications that pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate across some aspects of the curriculum, their achievement remains well below what would be expected from their starting points and compared with other pupils nationally.

External support

Members of the Guildford Education Partnership Trust work closely with school leaders to support ongoing improvement. They have contributed actively, ensuring that the statement of action is fit for purpose, and establishing effective governance in the form of the EWG. They have provided expertise from within the trust to ensure that the external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding was carried out promptly and effectively.

Members of the trust visit the school regularly to lend support and to monitor progress, liaising closely with the EWG. They provide valuable expertise that supports senior leaders in managing ongoing financial and staffing challenges. Colleagues from other schools beyond the trust are joining the school on secondment during the next academic year, bringing useful expertise and capacity to the senior leadership team. Staff from across the school value the range of opportunities for them to develop their own practice through links with colleagues in other schools within the trust. Year 11 pupils benefit from specialist science teaching supported by teachers from another local school, as part of partnership work which is developing over time. Collectively, these actions are beginning to drive forward improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, although not currently in a consistent way.