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Mr Nick Giles
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Dear Mr Giles

Special measures monitoring inspection of Chamberlayne College for the Arts

Following my visit to your school on 19 and 20 September 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 February 2017.

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 local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan are both fit for purpose.

The school may appoint one newly qualified teacher to the mathematics department before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner, and the director of children's services for Southampton. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lucy English
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2017

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management to raise achievement and improve pupils' attendance by ensuring that:
 - leaders have the skills and capacity to identify, implement, monitor and evaluate improvements in the areas for which they are responsible
 - leaders raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science as well as across all other subjects
 - governors challenge leaders more urgently on the attendance and achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching, especially for those pupils that are disadvantaged and/or need to catch up with their literacy and numeracy skills in Year 7.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching to raise pupils' achievement, by:
 - ensuring that teachers have high expectations of what disadvantaged pupils, boys, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the most able pupils, and most able disadvantaged pupils can do and can achieve
 - ensuring that teachers develop the skills and expertise to fully support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - planning learning activities that meet pupils' needs and match their starting points
 - ensuring that teachers make regular checks on pupils' learning and adapt tasks appropriately
 - increasing pupils' experiences of writing for a variety of purposes
 - improving the standards of pupils' presentation, spelling and grammatical skills
 - ensuring that lessons are free from low-level disruptive behaviour.

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 19 and 20 September 2017

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documents and met with staff, pupils and a group of parents to seek their views about the school. I spoke with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with a representative of the local authority and a local school leader who has provided support for the headteacher. I reviewed the school's website, scrutinised the single central record and a range of documents including those related to safeguarding and safer recruitment.

I visited a range of lessons in conjunction with school leaders. During these visits I looked at pupils' work and spoke with them. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. I took account of the school's own information about pupils' attainment and evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school improvement plan.

Context

Seven teachers have left the school since the inspection and one middle leader relinquished their leadership responsibility. The acting headteacher has been appointed substantive headteacher and is supported by a new leadership team, two of whom are new to the school and two appointed from existing staff. All have new responsibilities under the reorganisation of the leadership structure. Two further teachers have joined the school.

There is a new chair of the governing body and the governing body is now smaller in size. New governors have been co-opted, bringing specific skills, including finance.

The school day has been revised. Pupils now have five one-hour lessons a day, with additional 'enrichment' lessons after school for Year 11 pupils.

There has been no academy order yet and no indications as to the likely new sponsor.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The local authority had started the journey of improvement before the last inspection. The new headteacher and governors had made many changes but, at the time of the inspection, it was too soon to see the results of the work. The changed culture of the school and improved attainment in Year 11, including in English and mathematics, suggests that the actions are already making a positive difference.

Together with the seconded deputy headteacher last academic year, and now with the new leadership team, the headteacher is establishing clear expectations for all at the school. His quiet determination has won over pupils, staff and parents. All groups agree that the school is a different place in terms of culture and positivity. As a result, pupils display a sense of pride in their school community.

Staff are energised and keen to discuss the next steps of the journey. They trust their new leadership team and can see what has been achieved since the previous inspection. They understand that there is still work to do and they articulate strong confidence in school leaders to support and enable them to achieve it.

The small group of parents who spoke with me stated that the new headteacher has 'transformed' the school and that, since his arrival, behaviour of pupils and communication with parents has improved.

Governors demonstrate a solid resolve to hold leaders to account and improve the standard of provision for the pupils in their care. The reorganised governing body has recruited governors who offer the skills required to hold leaders to account. This includes governors with the financial knowledge to scrutinise the budget and make sure that work to reduce the financial deficit continues. In addition, the chair of the governing body uses his experience as a leader in governance services to question and scrutinise school leaders' plans and actions. Governors' documentation and discussions indicate that they now hold leaders to account and have a sharper understanding of details below headline figures. They recognise the improvements that have been achieved, particularly in core attainment data and behaviour. Governors are clear, however, that teaching is a long way from being good overall.

Due to the new make-up and organisation of the governing body, the recommended review of governance has not yet been completed. Governors and the local authority, reasonably, intend to review and evaluate the impact of governors' work when there has been time for their work to be measured.

A review of the use of the pupil premium was undertaken in November 2016, just prior to the inspection. The recommendations from this review are still to be fully implemented and governors recognise the need to monitor the use of this and other additional funding more sharply.

Working with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator has created an improvement plan to make sure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities get the extra help they require to make better progress. This is in its infancy. Leaders recognise that required improvements in the provision for these pupils, especially training teachers to provide appropriate support in lessons, have been too slow. In addition, there is not yet close monitoring of how the additional funding for these pupils is used.

There is now increased accountability at all levels. Senior leaders understand the

need to ensure that leaders at all levels have the skills and capacity to identify actions that will improve their areas. Leaders have accessed high-quality support as required to develop staff skills. For example, extensive work to improve the quality of assessment in English and mathematics was successful and teachers' predictions of these examination outcomes were accurate. Teachers welcome the increased clarity regarding expectations.

The school has not received an academy order from the Department for Education. The local authority is continuing to work with the regional schools commissioner to this end.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning across the school and understand that there is still some way to go. Leaders routinely observe teaching, and teachers are supported to develop their practice, although this is still in the early stages.

Many pupils are working below expectations, due to a legacy of underachievement. Too often, teachers do not fully understand what pupils know and therefore what they need in order to move onto their next learning steps. Leaders have prioritised, rightly, essentials in teaching practice. This aims to improve teaching generally before leaders start to refine and develop teachers' skills. However, leaders are aware that the pace needs to pick up in order to make a difference for current pupils. They understand that provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also needs to improve as teachers are not routinely planning and providing for their needs.

The 'quick fixes' leaders introduced to create consistency in the approach to teaching and learning have successfully started to secure improvement. Pupils and teachers now understand the baseline expectations for starting lessons. Leaders are aware that there is still a way to go and have a clear plan of action to establish a common approach to the planning, delivery and assessment of learning. The research which leaders have undertaken suggests that this approach will be a good match for the school's need at this time. However, leaders and governors are aware of the need to monitor and evaluate the work, adapting it as needed.

The new approach to support Year 11 English and mathematics was very successful last year. Leaders are expanding this approach to other examination groups this year. Rightly, they are selecting the most successful actions to develop further.

Teachers are very positive about the support and training they have received and the difference they can see that it has made. They also benefit from meeting with teachers from other schools during local authority networking opportunities. This helps them to understand the work that is still to be done in order to improve teaching, learning and assessment.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are polite and generally respectful of each other, their teachers and visitors. There is very little litter and pupils move around the building sensibly. The whole-school 'roll call' has helped to establish a starting point for the day, with calm expectations and sense of identity.

Pupils feel safe and told me that there is always someone they can talk to if they are worried about something. Pupils are proud of their inclusive community. They say that there has been some bullying but that it is quickly stopped by staff when reported. Parents say that staff are very supportive; one parent described the support she had received as 'awesome'. However, some parents say that it can sometimes be difficult to get in touch with the right person or get a response quickly.

Pupils told me that they can see the improvement in behaviour compared to last year. The majority of pupils are positive about the changes that have been introduced, including to uniform.

The internal exclusion room has helped to secure a reduction in lessons disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils told me that it helps and that it is generally used in a fair and consistent manner. However, leaders' monitoring information has identified specific groups of pupils who are more frequently internally excluded from their lessons. Leaders are aware of the need to identify the cause of this situation and to address it.

Absence remains an issue. Leaders have put in place a wide range of strategies and are evaluating and developing these. There has been some improvement in pupils' attendance but leaders are aware that this work needs to continue.

Outcomes for pupils

The learning walks and work seen in books indicate that outcomes are still low and inconsistent across the school. However, published outcomes from GCSE examinations in 2017 show that pupils' attainment rose in some subjects, including English and mathematics. This rise included more pupils achieving the highest grades as well as more gaining the new grades 4 and 5. In addition, headline measures in other subjects rose. However, this success was not consistent and some results were very disappointing.

Information presented by the school suggests that outcomes for different groups of pupils are similarly inconsistent. Leaders recognise that teaching and learning needs to improve in order to secure improvements in outcomes.

Pupils' presentation of their work is of varying quality. There is some work that demonstrates pride. However, it can also be untidy, with books containing unfinished pieces of work, even this early in the school year. Leaders have introduced a 'literacy' focus across the curriculum, but this is variable in application and success.

External support

The headteacher has benefited from high-quality support provided by the local authority and a local school. Regular meetings with these advisers have provided challenge and support for the headteacher and helped to establish strategic priorities. For example, they have helped him to develop the school's improvement plan, restructure the leadership team and to establish the new behaviour system. A deputy headteacher, seconded to the school following the previous inspection report, provided invaluable support with establishing new behaviour processes and higher expectations around the school.

Reviews commissioned from external advisers and the local authority have helped leaders to identify key actions to take. This helpful and accurate feedback has provided confirmation of the headteacher's own view of the school.