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23 January 2018

Miss Kirsteen Craig  
Principal  
The Kingfisher School  
Lichfield Road  
St Anne's Park  
Bristol  
BS4 4BJ

Dear Miss Craig

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Kingfisher School**

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 January 2018, 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 May 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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose

the school's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the

director of children's services for the city of Bristol. This letter will be published on

the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2017**

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership by ensuring that:
  - leaders develop clear systems which all staff follow so that leaders can accurately check the progress pupils make
  - governors have the skills and knowledge to be able to hold the school's leaders to account more rigorously for the performance of all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able
  - leaders provide the training and support for subject leaders so that they have the skills to raise standards in their subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school by ensuring that:
  - teachers have high expectations of pupils in their class to enable them to make accelerated progress
  - rapid progress is made by all groups of pupils across the school, especially the most able, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils
  - pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils receive the support they need to overcome the additional barriers they face
  - teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate across the curriculum and that they use this knowledge to meet pupils' learning needs
  - teachers receive training to improve the quality of their teaching to eradicate the legacy of underachievement and to manage pupils' behaviour effectively
  - teachers use and apply the school's own systems to review pupils' work and to ensure that appropriate challenges are set, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Improve outcomes for children in the early years by ensuring that:
  - teaching and learning in the Reception Year build on the solid foundation of children's achievement in the Nursery class
  - staff use assessment information to provide activities which build on children's existing skills and allow for rapid progress to be made
  - the proportion of children who achieve the expected standard at the end of the Reception class increases.

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

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 January 2018**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, her two assistant principals, the English and early years leader and a group of pupils. She also met with the chair of the Venturers Trust Board and three representatives from the local governing body, including the chair of the governing body and the trust's head of academy improvement. The inspector met with a small group of parents who were attending the Year 6 assembly.

### **Context**

Since the inspection, there has been a substantial turnover of teachers. Five out of seven teachers took up their posts in September 2017. This includes two new assistant principals who were appointed to replace the role of the deputy headteacher, following her departure. A new temporary Reception class teacher joined the staff in January 2018 to cover long term absence.

The number on roll has declined since the inspection in May 2017 from 169 to 159. Pupils in the Nursery, Reception, Years 1 to 3 and Year 6 are taught in single-age-group classes. There is one mixed Year 4 and 5 class. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are accommodated in temporary classrooms during the new building project.

In September 2017 the academy trust of the school, CGS (Colston's Girl's Schools) Trust, merged with the Merchant's Academy Trust to create the Venturers Trust.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The principal has a firm grasp of what needs to be done and, a year into post with a new team around her, she is making impressive strides in securing the improvements needed to raise the standard of education at Kingfisher. Since the start of the current academic year, the principal has skilfully established a strong leadership team which supports her work and a school staff who, as they explain, are 'fully on board' with the improvement journey. They share the principal's ambition for the success of the school and are working well together to ensure that the pupils receive the best quality of education possible.

The principal herself models the highest expectations for her staff and pupils and this is reflected through all aspects of school life. She expects 'not a minute of learning time to be lost' and this is clearly evident both in the day-to-day classroom life and in and around the school. This has had a positive impact on not only staff and pupils, but also the wider community. For example, attendance rates have improved significantly because parents know that penalties are served if they fail to send their children to school regularly.

Although fit for purpose, school leaders, including governors, recognise that the action plan is an unwieldy document. It would benefit from an overview to ensure that it is accessible to all members of the school community. The principal uses it well as a working document which supports her effectively in her improvement work. Nevertheless, she is fully aware that targets for action need to have a greater emphasis on how they will impact on the progress that pupils make.

The introduction of a broader approach to the curriculum is ensuring that pupils receive a meaningful education. It is equipping them securely with the knowledge and skills they need for their future. Topics which start with a problem to solve, such as 'Should we stop eating chocolate?' or 'How can night shift workers get sleep during the day?' enables the pupils to explore different scientific, historical, geographical and design aspects which are purposeful and meaningful.

The new systems in place to track and check the progress that pupils make are fully understood by teaching staff and are used effectively to identify those individuals who need extra support to catch up or extend their learning. Senior leaders regularly and systematically hold teachers to account for their pupils' progress. This is ensuring that no individuals or groups slip under the radar or falter in their learning.

The well-established early years leader maintains a close watch on the Reception class and provides the relevant support and guidance for temporary staff. Leaders are fully aware that staff absence and the turbulence caused by the need to employ temporary Reception class teachers has limited the acceleration of improvement needed in the teaching and learning for this year group.

Leaders new to their roles are making a strong contribution to school improvement. Working closely with the principal, her leadership team has developed confidence in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning through learning walks and book sampling. The English leader has also made a positive start to her new role as a result of coaching from one of the assistant principals. New leaders report that they have had some training provided by the trust but acknowledge that visiting a wider range of schools would help them to develop and extend their leadership skills further.

The external reviews of governance and the school's use of pupil premium funding which were recommended in the inspection report have not yet taken place. These are scheduled to do so shortly. Governors have been proactive in developing their skills by taking advantage of training organised through the trust, the local authority and at a national level. Of particular note is the way in which those governors with a brief for safeguarding and teaching and learning have developed their understanding of school life. They have started to meet leaders regularly and ask searching questions. Although the chair of the local board meets with the principal on a regular basis, it is not clear how governors routinely challenge senior leaders and hold them to account.

Parents who spoke to the inspector expressed how pleased they were with the changes that have been made to all aspects of school life. They could not praise the principal and her staff highly enough.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Teaching is characterised by high expectations, secure subject knowledge and clear exposition. This ensures that pupils understand what they are learning and are clear about what is expected of them. A consistency of approach across the school ensures that there is equality of opportunity for all and a shared sense of purpose. Best use is made of all available learning time in lessons. For example, pupils practise their tables or learn spellings as they move from one activity to another. This helps them to consolidate new knowledge and skills.

Although most classrooms are based currently in temporary accommodation, teachers make imaginative use of their teaching areas to stimulate and motivate the pupils to learn. Interesting and interactive displays and activities, such as an excavation site, are created to 'hook' the pupils' attention and engage them with a particular topic. Pupils make effective use of the opportunities they are given to use and apply their skills. For example, they confidently solve a range of mathematical problems practically using a wide range of different types of resources.

Pupils' workbooks show that they are being systematically taught key skills over time. All teachers follow rigorously the school's agreed marking policy and this is used well to help with misconceptions and reinforce pupils' learning. The regular assessing and analysing of their work is ensuring that teachers are clear about those pupils who need extra support and the most able who require further challenge.

Pupils report that the work that they are now set is much more challenging because their teachers regularly check on how well they are doing. Year 6 pupils eagerly attend the extra work sessions during their lunch breaks and are clear about the targets they are working towards.

Those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive appropriate teaching which is carefully tailored to meet their specific needs. Nevertheless, it also relates to the curriculum that their classmates are covering, thus ensuring that they are maintaining a breadth of experience.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils have noticed lots of improvements in the school which they are very pleased about. They report that they feel motivated to learn and are eager to please their teachers. This is demonstrated by their positive attitudes and the high level of concentration seen by the inspector during lessons. It is also reflected in the

improving attendance rates.

Pupils appreciate the additional opportunities they are now being given to play a greater part in the life of the school. For example, the newly created learning council is enabling pupils to share their views and opinions with senior leaders. The head girl, head boy and their deputy are impressive ambassadors for the school.

Pupils also report that the school has improved because 'the behaviour is much better'. As one pupil explained, 'the principal does not take any bad behaviour... she deals with it immediately'. They are very clear about the expectations of behaviour and proudly show visitors to their class charts, which show the progress they have made with their behaviour. They readily accept short sessions out of their breaktime as a punishment for a misdemeanour. The changes in the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are positively reflected in the significant decline in exclusion rates.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The disappointing decline in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in 2017 was a direct result of staff turbulence and poor teaching in the Reception class. School leaders are working effectively to rectify the underachievement of this year group by providing additional teaching support and rigorously checking pupils' ongoing progress. However, leaders are fully aware that, given the continuing staff instability, progress in Reception remains a concern.

The proportion of pupils who met the expected requirements of the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017 was average. This was an improvement from previous years when the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected level was below average. This improvement reflects a more consistent approach to the teaching of reading which was introduced by the principal shortly after she was appointed.

Mathematics results at the end of both key stages in the 2017 national tests were below the national average and reflected a legacy of underachievement in this subject. This is being swiftly rectified by school leaders, who adopted a new approach to the teaching of mathematics at the start of the academic year. Focusing on providing quality training and rigorous coaching, the mathematics leader has given teaching staff confidence to teach this subject fluently. As a result, the detailed tracking systems and work in the pupils' mathematics books already show that after two terms pupils' progress has rapidly accelerated. Most-able mathematicians are receiving more challenge and this enabling them to work at a greater depth and develop further their knowledge and skills.

In 2017, the test results at the end of Year 6 highlighted the differences between different groups of pupils in reading and writing. Although the proportion of middle-attaining pupils achieving the expected standard in reading and writing was average, the progress made by lower-attaining pupils in writing was significantly below average. Pupils' writing books indicate that higher teacher expectations are impacting positively on the quality and depth of their work. School leaders know

that their next step in improving outcomes is to focus on improving pupils' writing skills through the training and coaching of teaching staff.

### **External support**

The school has received support from the multi-academy trust including governor training, using performance information and understanding the expectations of Ofsted. There has also been some training for subject leaders. Shortly, Governors and academy leaders are to receive training on the development of school improvement plans. There are further plans to set up meetings with other academies within the trust so that moderation of pupils' work can take place. However, given that the training is generally delivered to all the multi-academy schools in a category of concern, leaders at Kingfisher report that they would benefit from a more bespoke approach.

The trust's head of academy improvement meets with the school principal twice a week to review the progress being made and to discuss next steps. Given the rapid and accelerated improvements being made in the school, there are plans to reduce these biweekly meetings to enable the principal to give more time to supporting her staff and pupils.

A representative of the regional schools commissioner meets the multi-academy trust leaders regularly and has visited the school to discuss the progress that the school is making. Reviews are positive, highlighting that 'the principal is demonstrating strong leadership and engaging staff in ensuring rapid improvement'.