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Mr Liam McDaid
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Dear Mr McDaid

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bolton UTC

Following my visit with Paul Cocker, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your college on 7 and 8 February 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 college's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the college became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2017. 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 college may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Undertake a review of governance.
- Improve the capacity of the governing body to:
 - fully embrace the culture of a UTC
 - accurately evaluate the performance of the college through objective analysis
 - hold leaders, including the chief executive officer (CEO), rigorously to account for the quality of education provided by the college
 - show integrity in the recruitment of new pupils.
- Ensure that college leaders and managers are given time throughout the week to fulfil their responsibilities.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make by:
 - improving the accuracy with which teachers evaluate the achievement of their pupils
 - ensuring that teachers use their understanding of what their pupils already understand and can do to plan learning activities that better meet pupils' needs
 - ensuring that leaders give support to those teachers whose work is not good enough
 - ensuring that, as a priority, teachers who are timetabled to teach a class do so without being redirected to other activities.
- Ensure that pupils start courses that are appropriate, based on their prior attainment as well as their career aspirations.
- Improve the effectiveness of safeguarding by ensuring that procedures include:
 - a full and accurate record of what has been done to ensure the safeguarding of individuals
 - a full and accurate description of what needs to be done, by whom and by when to ensure the safeguarding of individuals
 - regular and frequent reviews of each pupil's case to ensure that all staff and external agencies are doing what is expected of them.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 February 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the college's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting principal, other senior leaders, middle leaders, groups of pupils, parents and teachers. Inspectors also met with three members of the interim management committee, including the chair and a consultant employed by Tauheedul Education Trust (TET). The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the Baker Dearing Educational Trust.

Inspectors carried out joint learning walks with the acting principal and vice-principal and observed pupils and students during lessons and social times. They also undertook a scrutiny of pupils' and students' work. Inspectors reviewed the college's safeguarding policies and practices and checked the single central record. Inspectors also considered the 21 parent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, there have been some changes to staffing. Two science teachers left the college at the end of the 2017 autumn term. One science teacher has been appointed. Two humanities teachers who are working in a supply capacity will be made permanent members of staff this term.

The interim management committee (IMC) is in the final stages of seeking to gain approval from the regional schools commissioner and the Department for Education to join a multi-academy trust. The IMC has commissioned an external review of governance. As a result, the chair of the IMC is in the process of seeking to recruit an additional member to the committee to increase its expertise.

The IMC and college leaders are supported by consultants from TET. The Trust's consultants have undertaken reviews of English, mathematics, science and safeguarding. The subject leader for mathematics is also receiving support from Sale Grammar School.

The college's roll stands at 218, which is a low proportion of its maximum capacity of 600. There are 12 pupils in Year 9.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting principal has been instrumental in nurturing a culture of honesty and respect in the college. He has developed a sense of teamwork among staff. Staff who spoke with inspectors said that they enjoy working at the college and are optimistic about the future. Staff morale is high. One teacher commented: 'It's a great working atmosphere. We really enjoy working here.'

Staff are enthusiastic about the support that they receive from senior leaders, which is beginning to have a positive impact on the behaviour of pupils. For example, staff feel that recent training on behaviour management is improving classroom management practices.

Leaders have continued to address the areas identified as needing improvement in the previous inspection. The current action plan contains specific actions that are helping leaders to steer the college in the right direction. However, they recognise that the action plan requires further refinement to take account of the college's most pressing priorities and to clarify intended outcomes and impact on pupils' and students' achievement.

The college's safeguarding arrangements are effective. The single central record is compliant with statutory requirements. Staff have been trained and are aware of the action that they must take should they have any concerns about pupils' or students' safety and welfare. Leaders maintain good communication with external agencies to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils and students. A member of the IMC checks all safeguarding arrangements. Pupils and students have been taught effectively about how to keep themselves safe when they are online.

Members of the IMC want the best for the college and are supportive of the acting principal. They meet fortnightly and receive monthly reports from him. However, minutes of the interim committee's meetings show that members do not challenge all leaders effectively in relation to the improvement of the college. They focus more on its operational running. Leaders and members of the IMC have also secured substantial external support for the college, which has proved a useful stimulus for change. However, it is too early to see the impact of this support.

Leaders reviewed assessment procedures in the autumn term. However, a systematic approach to quality assurance of teachers' assessments is not yet fully in place. Scrutiny of pupils' and students' work shows that work in books does not match teachers' assessments. Leaders acknowledge that there is further work to do to ensure the accuracy of assessments and predicted grades.

Middle leaders have benefited from recent training and are developing their skills to lead their areas of responsibility. However, some middle leaders are not evaluating the quality of teaching well enough in their departments to identify where further improvements need to be made. As a result of this, they are not effecting change as rapidly as they could be.

Pupils and students benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities, including trips to the sponsor university's institute of motorsport to take part in national competitions in motorsport engineering. Pupils and students also have the opportunity to participate in trips and visits to local hospitals and multinational engineering employers. However, pupils and students do not have the opportunity

to use all of the extensive equipment that is available at the college.

Leaders have created a careers strategy which is predicated on its core themes of activate, break through and cultivate. The strategy has been evaluated against the Gatsby benchmarks for careers guidance. While there are actions attached to this self-evaluation, there are no deadlines or milestones. Additionally, the strategy does not sufficiently prioritise the requirement to provide pupils and students between Year 9 and Year 12 with independent advice about the range of educational opportunities available to them in addition to the sixth form and local further education colleges.

Parents who spoke to inspectors enthused about the support that their children receive at the college. They are grateful for the opportunities that the college has given to their children. The vast majority of parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said they would recommend the college to others.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains inconsistent across the college. Leaders appreciate that there is work to be done to strengthen teaching across the college so that it better meets the learning needs of individual pupils and students.

Teachers have good relationships with pupils. Pupils appreciate their teachers and are generally keen to do well. Most are interested in their learning. They listen well in lessons and they know what they need to do to complete activities. They can recall facts and processes taught in previous lessons.

Leaders provide regular opportunities for teachers to share their practice through morning briefings and training events. There is evidence that teachers are starting to use assessment information to plan work that is tailored to pupils' needs, although sometimes the level of work is not appropriate. Teachers do not sufficiently challenge those pupils and students who have the ability to achieve higher grades.

Work scrutiny across key stage 4 and the sixth form shows that assessments made of pupils' and students' learning are not secure. Many of the assessments for pupils' and students' attainment and progress are overoptimistic. The college has received significant external support to improve the accuracy of assessment, but this is yet to translate into sustained improvements in the quality of teaching.

Most pupils are beginning to take more pride in their work, which is neat and well presented. Pupils' learning in mathematics and science in key stage 4 is improving, but remains weak. Stronger teaching in key stage 4 was observed in English. For example, teachers used questioning to gauge and extend pupils' understanding. Pupils are encouraged to write extended answers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are polite and respectful. They wear their uniform smartly and move around the building in an orderly manner. Staff deal swiftly and appropriately with any issues that may arise. Pupils socialise well at break and lunchtimes.

Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe and that bullying is rare. They know who they can turn to if anything is worrying them. All members of staff and almost all pupils who spoke with inspectors were clear that behaviour has improved, both in lessons and at social times. Fixed-term exclusions have continued to decline over time. The behaviour of pupils in lessons is largely compliant and calm. The vast majority of pupils are interested in their learning.

Leaders are working tirelessly to improve the attendance of pupils further. Despite this, the number of pupils missing learning as a result of holidays taken during term time remains a concern for leaders. Rigorous measures are in place and decisive action is taken to improve attendance. Overall attendance is in line with the national average for secondary schools. Persistent absence has decreased. However, some pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, still do not attend as regularly as they should.

Outcomes for pupils

GCSE results for 2017 indicate that during key stage 4 at the college and key stage 3 at their predecessor school, pupils made slow progress across a number of subjects, including English and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils from all starting points made less progress across a range of subjects than other pupils nationally.

Sixth-form published results in 2017 indicate that students on vocational courses did better than those who completed academic courses. Students who followed the academic pathways underachieved significantly compared to other students nationally.

Leaders' own information suggests that pupils in key stage 4 and students in the sixth form are making better progress than last year. School data indicates that the differences between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are diminishing.

However, observations of pupils and students in lessons and a scrutiny of their work indicate that assessment information is overoptimistic. In the sixth form, due to weak management information systems, teachers do not have an accurate understanding of the progress that students make on their courses.

Pupils and students currently at the college are not making the progress that they should across most subjects. Leaders acknowledge that progress in GCSE mathematics continues to lag behind that of other subjects. Leaders recognise that

more work needs to be done to ensure the accuracy of baseline assessments and current and predicted grades.

Leaders are in the early stages of developing literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

Leaders and managers have not successfully ensured that students undertake work experience on their 16 to 19 study programme. The school provided only approximately half of all students in 2016/17 with work experience placements. This percentage is too low and means that the school does not sufficiently prepare half of its pupils for further study or employment in the sectors related to their studies. Leaders now have a range of strategic plans to improve engagement with health sciences and employers specialising in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Leaders are working collaboratively with the sponsor university and a local college to ensure that there are more opportunities to place current students with employers.

External support

The college is receiving strong support from TET, through a 'school to school' support programme. Support consists of quality assurance and mentoring for the acting principal and vice-principal. Middle leaders are receiving subject support for mathematics from Sale Grammar School, an outstanding school in Altrincham. The Baker Dearing Educational Trust is also providing effective support to the college.