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Ms Pauline Montalto  
Headteacher  
Thomas Bennett Community College  
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Dear Ms Montalto

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Thomas Bennett Community College**

Following my visit to your school on 3 July 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- improve teaching across the school to enable pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, to make good progress across a range of subjects
- ensure that teachers consistently use assessment information to plan work to enable all pupils to improve.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and executive headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and representatives from the multi-academy trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A range of school documents were evaluated, including the post-inspection action plan and the school evaluation form. I visited careers lessons with senior leaders. I also met with groups of pupils from across the school and reviewed outcomes for pupils in the school. I considered a range of pupils' work.

## **Context**

Since the inspection in November 2016, the executive headteacher is new to post. She took over in September 2017.

## **Main findings**

You and the trust made a slow start to improvement following the last inspection. However, since the appointment of the executive headteacher in September 2017, more rapid action has been taken with a determination to improve the school. Your collective effort to develop consistently good teaching is the driving force behind pupils beginning to improve their progress and securing better attainment over time. Students in the sixth form are proud of the improvements in the school, particularly relating to the quality of teaching from subject specialists.

Pupils who finished Year 11 in 2017 made better progress and achieved marginally better results than their predecessors. The proportion achieving a grade 4 or 5 (previously grade C) at GCSE in both English and mathematics has increased from that in 2016. Pupils currently in Year 11 are on track to improve achievement across a range of subjects. Year 7 pupils have made an encouraging start to their studies and are making good progress. In 2017, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has deteriorated, but there is an improving picture this year.

Leaders have increased their drive to improve the quality of teaching across the school. A comprehensive package of support helps teachers to improve their practice. Senior leaders monitor the impact of this training, and put further help in place where needed. You have introduced a range of more rigorous accountability strategies, including a robust system of performance management. While the pace of improvement across the school is slow, there are clear signs that the quality of teaching is beginning to improve. This consistent approach is enabling leaders to promptly identify emerging priorities to improve teaching, and to put training, mentoring and other support in place. Teachers now expect to be held to account for the progress of pupils.

Teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are beginning to be more accurate, helping teachers and leaders to track progress and target extra help more

effectively. There is, however, more work to do to make effective assessment practice consistent across the school.

You have promoted a more robust understanding in all staff of what pupils already can do, know and understand in order to raise achievement. You have done this by improving the transition process from Year 6 to Year 7 and through forging stronger links with primary schools to ensure that pupils make progress from the day they arrive. You are moderating pupils' work across a range of good schools to ensure a clearer understanding of national standards.

Extensive training has been provided for staff to improve their use of questioning to probe pupils' knowledge and extend their understanding. Work in pupils' books reflects a better use of questioning to deepen understanding.

A restructure of the post-16 curriculum has ensured that students are now offered courses appropriate to their prior attainment. Sixth-form students told me that they feel fully supported in the application process for both higher education and employment, through a programme which begins early in Year 12. On the day of my visit, you were running a careers event with over 50 employers. You have improved the numbers of Year 11 pupils who leave school and secure a place in education, employment or training.

You have taken strong action to improve communication with parents and carers, including the setting up of parent focus groups. In your most recent survey of parents' views and based on 180 responses, the vast majority of parents said that they feel well informed about their child's progress.

Leaders know that while a good deal has been achieved in the past year, the school is still in the early stages of its journey to become good. You fully recognise that the quality of teaching is not consistently strong across the school, and achieving this remains your priority. Disadvantaged pupils do not currently make the necessary progress for them to catch up with other pupils nationally.

### **External support**

Leaders and teachers are supported by being part of the Kemnal Academies Trust. The trust took action to appoint a new executive headteacher at the start of this academic year. Leaders from the trust monitor the impact of school leaders' actions. The trust supports the local governing body in ensuring that it meets its statutory duties.

Leaders and teachers work closely with other successful schools from within and outside the trust. This support has modelled good practice for teachers and leaders.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive

officer of the Kemnal Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sir Robin Boshier  
**Ofsted Inspector**