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27 September 2018

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Dear Richard Jacobs

Special measures monitoring inspection of Budmouth College

Following my visit with Gill Hickling, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 18–19 September 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 2018.

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 is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers 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 Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2018.

- Improve leadership and management so that pupils receive an acceptable standard of education by ensuring that:
 - the governing body rapidly resolves its internal differences and focuses solely on providing school leaders with the challenge and support that they need
 - the school's leadership works closely and cooperatively with the governing body, assisting governors to exercise their role of critical oversight
 - safeguarding is made effective by establishing robust procedures to monitor those pupils who are not currently receiving education on-site
 - the quality of middle leadership develops rapidly, including by empowering it to play a full role in the monitoring of teaching and holding it accountable for academic outcomes
 - the monitoring of additional funding, especially the pupil premium, is much sharper by focusing precisely on the impact of its use on improving pupils' outcomes.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - the monitoring of teaching places much greater emphasis on the progress pupils make when evaluating the impact that teachers have
 - teachers raise their expectations of the quality of work they accept from pupils, especially in key stage 3
 - teaching provides a greater degree of challenge to all pupils, whatever their starting points
 - teachers address pupils' misconceptions quickly and pupils understand clearly how to improve their work.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - taking rapid and effective action to improve attendance, especially that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - eradicating the low-level disruption that interferes with pupils' learning.
- Improving pupils' personal development and welfare by ensuring that:
 - teaching develops in pupils the habits of successful learners
 - pupils take a greater pride in the quality of work they produce, including in the way it is presented.
- Improve the quality of the 16 to 19 study programmes by ensuring that:

- the monitoring of teaching in the sixth form is more robust
- teaching on A-level courses promotes better progress by students.

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 18 September 2018 to 19 September 2018

Evidence

Inspectors visited lessons jointly with senior leaders. They scrutinised documents and pupils' work. Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders, a newly qualified teacher and groups of pupils. The lead inspector also held meetings with the chair of the interim executive board and a representative from the local authority.

Context

A clerk to the governors is the only member of staff who has been appointed since the previous inspection. Roles and responsibilities have been reorganised for senior and middle leaders.

The governing body has been disbanded and replaced by an interim executive board. This body is overseeing the process to find a suitable sponsor for the school, which is currently underway.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The principal is leading the school with quiet purpose and integrity in challenging circumstances. He is galvanising support steadily throughout the school community because he knows what needs to change and is setting out a positive vision. His efforts to move the school forward are supported by the accuracy of his self-evaluation and acknowledgement of the school's weaknesses.

In order to overcome these weaknesses, the principal has clarified lines of accountability and reorganised leaders' responsibilities. Although leaders are adjusting to these changes, they are now taking greater ownership of their work to be more effective in their roles. To speed up the rate of progress, leaders at all levels need to unite fully behind the principal's vision and work together in the best interests of pupils.

Senior leaders have been helped in their efforts to improve the school by the removal of the previous dysfunctional governing body. The new interim executive board (IEB) consists of experienced professionals who have expertise in education and finance. They are focused squarely on improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement. Consequently, although newly formed, they have adopted a robust, challenging approach to ensure that school leaders are held to account. The principal readily acknowledges the importance of meeting the more intensive demands of the IEB to explain and account for school performance on a regular basis.

Middle leaders feel positive about the direction the school is taking. This is partly because the job descriptions for learning leaders, who have responsibility for subjects, have been revised and there is a greater consistency of approach. They are now held to greater account for the quality of teaching and outcomes in their subjects. Consequently, learning leaders now feel more empowered to implement, and have an impact on, school initiatives. They feel optimistic because the wider staff are keen to move the school forward. One learning leader commented, '...there is a will to make things better.' However, this way of working is new to them and learning leaders have different views about the extent to which they would like to be autonomous or directed by senior leaders. It is too soon to evaluate the current effectiveness of middle leaders, in light of their new responsibilities.

Leaders have not acted swiftly enough to prioritise the needs of disadvantaged pupils. The review of the additional pupil premium funding, recommended at the time of the previous inspection, has not yet taken place. This now needs to happen with some urgency. The principal has taken on leadership of this area up to this point. However, his capacity is limited, given his other responsibilities. Disadvantaged pupils do not currently have a high enough profile in the school. Staff do not consistently use information they are provided with to plan for pupils' needs and adapt their teaching. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' outcomes are not improving. By the time of the next visit, more rapid progress will be expected in this area.

Safeguarding is effective in the school. The designated lead has a clear and detailed oversight of safeguarding matters. She works assiduously to ensure that all staff receive appropriate, up-to-date training and that they understand the procedure for making pupil referrals. The referral system, which records information online, is well organised. Case details are arranged chronologically and indicate which staff have been involved and actions taken. The safeguarding team, including staff with wider pastoral responsibilities, communicate well with each other and have effective links with external agencies. Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are thorough and up to date.

Very few pupils now receive, or are entitled to receive, education off site. In these cases, staff know who they are and are monitoring these pupils more closely than at the time of the previous inspection. They also liaise effectively with partner agencies, such as social care, in this regard. The practice of using study leave as a form of exclusion, although not applicable at this time, has been stopped.

In keeping with the rest of the school, leadership roles in the sixth form have been refined and clarified. The four assistant directors know what is expected of them and are providing effective support to the director of sixth form. This is leading to more rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and students' progress. Leaders have just implemented a new data management system, which will help staff to set suitably challenging targets and monitor progress. However, the impact of this is yet to be determined. Student retention rates are above average, as is the proportion of

students who go on to further or higher education, training or employment once they leave school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is variable throughout the school, including the sixth form. This view is shared by pupils, who said that the best teachers are the ones who enjoy teaching them.

Leaders have introduced the 'Masterclass' programme. This initiative provides high-quality professional development for staff, many of whom are learning leaders. However, as a relatively new initiative, not all staff have benefited from this training to date. Nevertheless, those staff who have been trained are more focused on checking what pupils have, or have not, learned and using this information to adapt their teaching. They are using more open, thoughtful questions to engage pupils in their learning and encourage them to think more deeply. These discussions are also presenting opportunities to discover and challenge pupils' misconceptions. Where teaching is more effective, pupils behave well and they develop more positive, enthusiastic attitudes to learning.

However, teaching is still failing to inspire pupils. Pupils are not encouraged sufficiently to think for themselves or develop a reflective, intellectually curious mindset. This is because teachers' expectations of what they can achieve are too low and pupils are set work that is not demanding or interesting enough. The targets set for pupils are also too low. This encourages passivity in pupils, which prevents them from making the most of their learning. Nearly half of the pupils who spoke with the lead inspector indicated that they are not sufficiently challenged in their lessons.

Some teachers do not use the information they have about pupils' abilities and backgrounds to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs sufficiently, particularly those who are disadvantaged and the most able. Too often, pupils all complete the same work using the same resources.

Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects, which is particularly evident in sixth-form teaching. Many staff benefit from positive relationships with pupils. The pupils who spoke with the lead inspector said that they felt supported by staff, who were quick to help them if they got stuck.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders are taking firm steps to reduce instances of low-level disruption in the school. On the one hand, small but visible and significant changes have been made to certain school routines. For example, the expectation at the start of lessons is that pupils stand behind their chairs and wait to be told to sit down by the teacher before doing so. One pupil told the lead inspector that this had 'eliminated

disruption at the start of lessons'. Changes such as these are helping to foster a greater sense of order and respect.

On the other hand, leaders are also taking a strategic approach to the management of behaviour. They have worked with all staff to begin implementing a more positive, less punitive culture. This culture is underpinned by mutually respectful relationships, with greater emphasis placed on rewarding good behaviour. This work is still in its embryonic stages. However, pupils report that the school is calmer and that there are fewer fights and incidents of bullying than there were prior to the principal's appointment. They comment that behaviour improves as pupils move up through the school.

Inspectors did not witness much low-level disruption in classrooms during the inspection. However, pupils were observed standing outside classrooms because they had been sent out for poor behaviour. Middle leaders also stated that poor behaviour was hampering efforts to improve teaching and learning. Although they are right to acknowledge that behaviour still requires improvement, it is a misconception to assume that the quality of teaching will only improve once behaviour does so. Leaders and staff must also acknowledge that behaviour will improve when teaching becomes more challenging and engaging.

Pupils are generally considerate and orderly as they move around the school. They also take more pride in their uniform than they used to, although staff have to tell pupils repeatedly to tuck their shirts in. Some pupils are too slow to move to lessons after social time. This lack of urgency reflects a casual, 'laissez-faire' approach to learning and the quality of work they produce.

The attendance of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, is not showing marked signs of improvement. Leaders have the information they need to track the attendance of groups closely, but this is not being used to best strategic effect in the case of disadvantaged pupils. The high levels of persistent absence are not falling because leaders at all levels do not adopt a systematic, analytical approach to the use and monitoring of attendance information.

Outcomes for pupils

Examination outcomes in 2018 were an improvement on 2017 in many respects. The attainment of Year 11 pupils who left the school last year was close to the national average across core subjects, particularly English. Pupils' progress overall was better than the progress made by the previous year's pupils, although it was still below average. However, for many curriculum subjects, pupils' actual results were lower than expected.

The work of current pupils shows that they are not challenged to make the progress of which they are capable. Too often, tasks are set which fail to deepen pupils' thinking or enable them to 'wrestle' with tricky concepts. Sequences of learning do

not develop in an organic way, so that prior learning feeds into future learning. Instead, tasks are limiting or disconnected. There is little evidence of teachers providing suitable direction to pupils, regardless of their level of ability. In too many cases, pupils' success is determined by their own natural resources and self-reliance. There are exceptions across the curriculum. This is not an issue determined by subject, but by individual teacher.

Unsurprisingly, because pupils have too little guidance about their work in some subjects, the quality and presentation are not good enough. Some pupils produce work that is incomplete, scrappy and poorly laid out because they are allowed to do so. This is a matter for leadership at all levels. There has not been sufficient scrutiny of pupils' work to check that it is of the expected standard. Leaders need to ensure that teachers have higher expectations of pupils' work and pupils' commitment towards it. This will be a key focus for the next monitoring visit.

External support

Leaders have received strong support from the local authority since the previous inspection. The school improvement partner (SIP) has been instrumental in recruiting and assisting members of the IEB. She has also brokered support from the Jurassic Coast Teaching Alliance to provide necessary practical training to enable staff to improve their teaching practice. Middle leaders are also benefiting from this support to develop their leadership skills. The SIP has worked closely with the principal to develop the school development plan, so that it is a collaborative document of which all senior leaders have ownership. It is focused appropriately on the areas for improvement from the previous inspection and will assist leaders to move forward.