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23 September 2019

Mr Rupert Maule  
Bridge Learning Campus  
William Jessop Way  
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Bristol  
BS13 0RL

Dear Mr Maule

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Bridge Learning Campus**

Following my visit to your school on 12 September 2019, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in May 2018. 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 actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bristol. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah McGinnis

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment across all phases, including the early years, and, hence, pupils' achievement by:
  - continuing to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - ensuring that teaching meets the needs of all pupils, especially pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
  - ensuring that the most able pupils in every year, including the early years, reach the standards of which they are capable
  - ensuring that pupils know how to improve their work and do so
  - improving writing skills across all parts of the school.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - firmly establishing recent improvements in leaders' accountability
  - ensuring middle leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching are accurate
  - developing assessment policy and practice so that teachers have an accurate picture of pupils' progress, which allows them to plan the next steps in learning.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - continuing to improve attendance so that it at least matches other schools nationally
  - setting high expectations of presentation so that pupils develop a sense of pride in their work.

It is recommended that the school commissions an external review of its use of pupil premium funding.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 12 September 2019**

### **Evidence**

During the day, the inspector met with members of the leadership team to discuss the progress that leaders have made in the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. The inspector visited lessons with leaders and scrutinised pupils' work across a range of subjects and age groups. The inspector spoke on the telephone with the chair of the board of trustees and met with curriculum leaders, the designated safeguarding lead and pupils. The inspector also scrutinised documents provided by the school, including its self-evaluation and development plan, information about pupils' safety and safeguarding and the single central record of checks on staff recruitment.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring visit, there have been several significant staff changes. The headteacher took up this post in September 2019, having been a member of the school's leadership team prior to this date. The leadership team, in both the primary and secondary phase, has been remodelled since then. At the beginning of the academic year, two new subject leaders in humanities and modern foreign languages were appointed, as well as several teachers. The local governing body is now led by two recently appointed co-chairs.

### **The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection**

Leaders continue to work with determination to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The appointment of a new headteacher, and the changes made to key strategic roles, have created enthusiasm among staff. Senior leaders are reflective about the improvements that have been made so far. They remain ambitious for what the school has the potential to achieve in the future.

The previous inspection highlighted the need for leaders to improve teaching across all phases, including in the early years. Leaders have begun to consider carefully what pupils are taught and when.

The starting point for this has been for leaders to establish how the curriculum can be both challenging and reflect the needs of the school's context. Hence, leaders' priorities to develop reading and writing, to extend the range of pupils' vocabulary, and to widen the scope of pupils' experiences are well founded and understood by staff. Leaders have made changes to the secondary curriculum, for example, so that pupils can study a wide range of subjects for longer.

Leaders have made greater strides in the development of the curriculum in the early years and primary phase. Albeit at an early stage, there is evidence of teachers

ordering learning in a way that supports pupils to build on what they already know and be prepared for what comes next. This approach is less well established in the secondary phase, particularly at key stage 3.

A particular focus has been on teachers developing the early years environment to facilitate pupils' wider learning. Children are settled, getting used to new routines. They are keen to talk about what they are learning. They show an understanding of the patterns of conversation and are able to share and work with others during free play. Other children form recognisable letters when practising their mark making.

Leaders have made changes to the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils receive additional support to develop their mathematical and literacy skills. They also learn about issues relating to their everyday lives, such as the importance of recycling. Pupils' attitudes are positive and they willingly contribute to discussion. However, there is no clear coordination of subject leaders contributing to the content of these sessions. This leads to a lack of challenge and clarity about how pupils can best improve their understanding or prepare for future learning.

There is still work to do to ensure that the curriculum is challenging enough for the most able pupils. Leaders have introduced a school-wide initiative to widen pupils' reading experience through texts with more complex themes. However, this initiative is in its infancy.

Leaders' focus on early reading skills from Reception and into the primary years has resulted in improved outcomes in the phonics screening check and improved outcomes at the end of Year 6. However, pupils' achievement across the school is still too variable.

Pupils' attitudes to school are positive but, despite this, attendance is still a persistent issue for leaders to resolve. Leaders continue to increase pastoral capacity and to evaluate their approach to ensure that pupils attend school more regularly. Nevertheless, absence, particularly in the secondary school, is too high.

At the time of the previous monitoring visit, leaders were awaiting the outcomes of the pupil premium review that was recommended at the previous inspection. This has now been received. Leaders have accepted the report's recommendations and this has shaped their plans for staff professional development. A more specific focus will be placed on the impact of these actions at the next monitoring visit.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

Leaders have modified the leadership structure, put in place in the aftermath of the previous inspection, to ensure long-term and sustainable improvement. The school has now emerged from a period of transition and is able to move forward with greater momentum.

Staff from the multi-academy trust work closely with school leaders and the governing body to improve the quality of education. Trust leaders are optimistic that the leadership team, although new, can provide the springboard for future improvement. They are also realistic. They understand that it is too soon to see the full impact of the work currently underway.

Governors and trust leaders are supportive of school leaders but acknowledge the wide scope of the improvement still needed. They recognise the need to challenge leaders and not to accept the information presented at face value. To help them do this, governors are seeking to recruit wisely to working parties and have visited classes with school leaders. Their schedule of visits for the forthcoming year is being devised so that they can be strategically aligned to the improvement plan. Governors have a broad overview of curriculum planning but their understanding of this, and their evaluation of the impact of additional funding, is currently underdeveloped.

Senior leaders value middle leaders as experts in their subject disciplines. Leaders have made key appointments to areas that have been historically weak. However, while middle leaders are revising their curriculum to ensure a logical progression of topics, these discussions are at an initial stage of planning, particularly in the secondary phase. Leaders have confidence in the accuracy of teachers' assessments and continue to focus on developing teachers' skills so that they can use this information to inform pupils' future learning.

Middle leaders value the opportunities to share practice with each other. They say that leaders are supportive of teachers' professional development and encourage them to be well briefed about developments in their subjects. Subject leaders feel respected by senior leaders. They say that leaders are cognisant of their workload, particularly at this crucial stage of curriculum development.

Safeguarding continues to be effective. Leaders are knowledgeable and diligent, recognising their role in advocating for pupils to ensure that they receive support. Staff have been trained to spot the potential signs of concern and how to report these. To support this work, leaders are developing the programme of personal, social and health education. Although this is still in development, pupils know how to keep themselves safe and healthy in their everyday lives.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Trust and school leaders have focused on appointing the right staff to drive forward school improvement.
- Leaders are clear about the next phase of school improvement. They have prioritised curriculum development. They are now ambitious for all learners, including pupils with SEND.

- Leaders continue to develop accountability and monitoring systems to ensure they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have not shied away from making difficult decisions to improve the areas that are not as strong as they should be.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Despite leaders' focus on the curriculum, this approach has not secured consistently high-quality curriculum planning across subjects.

### **External support**

The school does not receive significant support from outside the trust. However, internal support provided by the trust continues to be effective. Trust staff and governors conduct regular reviews to evaluate the school's effectiveness. The conclusions from these visits are used to inform subsequent actions.

The school has received support to strengthen leadership and to improve teaching. Teachers visit other schools within the trust, as well as further afield, to see effective practice. Staff from partner schools work regularly with teachers in specific areas, such as in the early years and the development of middle leadership.