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Mrs Helen Kent
King Solomon International Business School
Lord Street
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Dear Mrs Kent

Special measures monitoring inspection of King Solomon International Business School

Following my visit with Philip Hammond and Graham Tyrer, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 26–27 November 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2018. 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

I strongly recommend that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of directors, the regional schools commissioner

and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in key stage 3 so that, in all classes, pupils are offered the right level of challenge and support. Do this by:
 - making sure teachers plan work more specifically for pupils who have the potential to reach or exceed age-related standards in English, mathematics and science
 - insisting that all teachers use assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress to plan work that is suitably matched to pupils' needs and abilities, retains their interest and extends their learning
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to respond fully to questions during class discussions in order to challenge them more effectively
 - building on the good practice that exists in some lessons where teachers and support staff vigilantly support pupils to remain on task when working independently and regularly correct errors and address misunderstandings.

- Improve pupils' attainment and progress in key stage 3 and sustain improvements to pupils' achievement in key stage 1 as they transfer into key stage 2. Do this by:
 - making sure that in all classes across key stage 3 pupils make more rapid progress and that pupils in Year 9 are better prepared for key stage 4
 - reducing more rapidly the difference between the standards reached by disadvantaged pupils compared with others who are not disadvantaged
 - improving, with greater urgency, the achievement of key stage 3 pupils in science
 - making sure that those pupils who are capable of reaching or exceeding age-related standards in English and mathematics in key stage 3 do so.

- Make sure that staff apply consistently the school's procedures for managing pupils' behaviour during lessons in key stage 3 by:
 - ensuring that pupils develop positive attitudes to their work and thus improve their capacity to learn
 - applying more consistent approaches to modify and improve pupils' behaviour
 - reducing instances of persistent low-level disruption during lessons continuing to reduce temporary and repeat exclusion rates.

- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - consolidating and maintaining stable and secure senior leadership
 - building on the work being done by the strongest senior and middle leaders as the school continues to grow in size
 - making sure that leaders and governors evaluate more accurately the effectiveness of teaching and learning in order to address weaknesses and build on strengths
 - identifying the most important priorities for improvement in the school's strategic action plans, particularly those focusing on the quality of teaching
 - setting out in the school's short- and long-term action plans clear measures of success, as well as stages and milestones, to help leaders and governors evaluate the impact of actions taken to bring about and sustain improvement
 - implementing more robust performance management and oversight of teaching and learning to eliminate weak teaching in key stage 3
 - ensuring that governors are more vigilant in holding leaders to account and have access to objective and accurate assessments of the school's work and progress.

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

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 26 November 2019 to 27 November 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting school improvement director, other senior leaders and members of staff. An inspector spoke to the chair of the trust and to two directors by telephone and met with the chair of directors. Inspectors met groups of pupils from both the primary and secondary phases. Inspectors focused in depth on English, mathematics and science. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers at the start of the school day and took account of 39 responses to Ofsted's survey Parent View.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in June 2019, the acting school improvement director, who was the acting leader of the school, left at the end of the summer term. A new principal was appointed in September 2019 but left the following month. The head of the primary phase was appointed acting principal of the school in November 2019. A new acting school improvement director was also appointed in November 2019. She has been appointed co-executive headteacher from January 2020.

Restructuring of the senior leadership team started under the previous acting school improvement director. Following the review of the senior leadership team, the two secondary vice principal roles changed to assistant principals; they subsequently left in November 2019. A new head of secondary has been appointed from January 2020. The appointee has started to work one day a week in the school from November 2019. Two new posts, entitled head of key stage 3 and head of key stage 4, have been established. Permanent appointments have yet to be made, but both posts are currently being filled in a temporary capacity.

The head of faculty in mathematics was appointed in November 2019. There are currently no subject leaders in secondary for geography, modern foreign languages (MFL) and religious education (RE) and, in primary, for music and MFL.

Following the restructuring, there has also been a turnover of teaching and non-teaching staff. There are currently a number of temporary and cover staff in place in secondary, including in English, French, geography, mathematics, RE and science.

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

The steps taken by secondary leaders to secure the quality of education, including teaching, in secondary have been ineffective. In science and mathematics, and in some aspects of English, there is not enough challenge and support for pupils. In

science, for example, older pupils including most-able pupils were set undemanding work such as copying or answering simple one-word questions. A scrutiny of pupils' work in science from Year 1 to Year 10 revealed instances where primary pupils in Years 3 and 4 were sometimes set more challenging tasks than those in secondary. Work in pupils' books in secondary science showed too many examples where work was unfinished or wrong and where misconceptions had not been addressed.

There is no clear curriculum plan in place for mathematics in secondary. As a result, pupils make limited progress in their learning. There is a shortage of specialist teachers in mathematics. There has been a lack of continuity in teaching staff. This has led to work not being set or taught coherently in the subject.

The lack of leadership in secondary means that disadvantaged pupils are not making the progress they need to make in order to catch up with their peers nationally.

Plans are not well matched to pupils' needs, abilities or interests. Curriculum leaders have an over-reliance on commercial schemes of work in mathematics and science in secondary. Pupils are not making the progress they should from their starting points, as a result of this weak curriculum planning. There is also a lack of coordination in curriculum planning between primary and secondary phase subject leaders.

In secondary, work in pupils' books in English indicates that there is challenge for the most able pupils. Books show evidence of skills being taught in a systematic manner. Pupils can use the features of a diary entry, demonstrate evaluation and proof-reading skills and identify features of biographical writing. They use additional resources well to find information. Where the curriculum is planned well in English, clear progression is evident.

Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are progressing well, particularly in reading and mathematics. Their behaviour is of a high standard. Leaders have secured improvements in the quality of teaching and this has led to raised standards in key stage 1. Secure leadership has ensured that the quality of education has improved and that previous weaknesses in teaching have been eradicated.

Standards in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2 significantly improved from well below average in 2018 to broadly average in 2019. Standards in writing were still low in 2019 but improved compared to the previous year. They are no longer significantly below average.

Pupils' work seen in reading, mathematics and science in key stages 1 and 2 is of a high quality. In science, for example, pupils receive a range of challenges linked to the interactive experiments they conduct.

Leaders in secondary have not ensured that the behaviour policy is applied

consistently. They have not analysed incidents of pupil misbehaviour over time. Leaders are currently developing systems to do this, but these are not yet ready for use. The analysis of causes, responses to and patterns of referral to the isolation room is also limited. As a result, leaders are unclear whether the use of the room is having a positive impact on improving behaviour.

In secondary lessons, pupils become restless or bored due to the low level of stretch or interest in the tasks they are set in mathematics, science and MFL. Class discussions seen by inspectors were too often inhibited by the behaviour of some pupils. Typically, boys shouted out answers and too many girls did not engage, sitting quietly unless directly asked a question.

Expectation for pupils' behaviour is low in too many lessons in secondary. In mathematics and science, there was no sign of staff implementing the school's behaviour policy. This led to pupils, (almost always boys), being sent out of lessons without any prior warning. The isolation room is used extensively by staff, yet inspectors saw little sign of behaviour that was unsafe or challenging. Instead, teachers were unable or unwilling to challenge low-level disruptive behaviour that spread throughout the class. For example, pupils who were off task were giggling and chatting, shouting out or making silly, immature noises.

As a result of the low-level disruption and lack of challenge in lessons in the secondary phase, pupils in key stages 3 and 4 are making limited progress in a range of subjects, including mathematics, science and MFL.

The school's procedures for managing pupils' behaviour in lessons are applied consistently in English. Teachers do not need to apply the procedures in secondary lessons where pupils behave well or comply, including in drama, business studies, geography, physical education (PE) and RE.

Fixed-term exclusions rates have risen, compared to this time last year. There is no indication that the isolation room is leading to improved behaviour. Pupils who go there for initially low-level incidents are becoming institutionalised, making reintegration into mainstream lessons more difficult

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Overall, leaders have an accurate view of where the school is now and the scale of the task ahead to secure improvements. However, there has been significant turbulence and instability in the leadership and staff of the school, especially in the secondary phase, since the previous monitoring visit and the completion of the restructuring which was undertaken to bring about future improvement. This has had a detrimental effect on the progress that the previous school improvement director had made. As a result, the quality of education has declined, and behaviour of pupils has deteriorated in secondary. Leadership has remained consistently strong in the primary phase.

Parents spoken to by inspectors who have experience of children in both phases were acutely aware of the contrast in leadership between primary and secondary. They were full of praise for primary leaders but critical of the secondary phase. In particular, they are concerned about poor behaviour, a lack of specialist teachers in some subjects and the quality of education for older pupils. Inspection evidence concurs with these views.

A number of pupils have left the secondary phase prematurely since September 2019. Parents spoken to said that, because of their concerns, they were considering transferring, or had already transferred their children to another setting when they reached secondary age.

Directors, who have responsibility for governance, have taken swift and decisive action to make changes in senior leadership. However, they were also responsible for a lack of due diligence in the appointment of the previous principal.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The quality of education is strong in some subjects in secondary, such as PE and business studies. A well-planned curriculum in these subjects means pupils are learning in depth the body of knowledge they need to succeed.
- Pupils in primary behave very well and their attitudes to learning are consistently high.
- Parents welcomed the strong transition arrangements which are in place in primary to support their children going into Year 7. This was especially so for those parents who had children with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who had been bullied. The support for these pupils is strong, and leaders take effective action to tackle bullying.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. Leaders and staff place the safety and welfare of pupils at the heart of all their work. In discussion with inspectors, pupils said they feel safe. A large majority of parents responding to Parent View agreed that their children are kept safe.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Limited curriculum planning in some subjects in secondary, combined with a lack of specialist teachers, for example in French, means that pupils are making very little progress in their work. None of the pupils spoken to in key stage 3 during the inspection said they would choose French in key stage 4.
- Planning for writing in English in both primary and secondary phases does not allow sufficiently for the deepening of skills and knowledge. For example, instructions to 'discuss and record information' are converted a month later into 'recall and summarise events'.

- Too many pupils are absent and persistently absent. Work to promote attendance has not been effective.
- The weakest readers seen in Reception during the inspection did not have access to expert phonics teaching.

External support

The school has continued to engage with its school improvement partners. It has very recently started to work with a local successful school. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this work.