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Bridget Morris
Headteacher
Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School College of Performing Arts
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West Midlands
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Dear Mrs Morris

Special measures monitoring inspection of Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School College of Performing Arts

Following my visit with Huw Bishop, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 11–12 December 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 most 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 September 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 action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children’s services for Sandwell. This letter will be published on the

Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Niall Gallagher
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching, so that standards rise, especially in English and science, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of the amount and quality of work that pupils complete in lessons
 - make effective use of information about pupils' abilities and needs, including any special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, when planning lessons
 - provide pupils with sufficiently challenging work
 - ask questions which help to deepen pupils' understanding of their work
 - check pupils' understanding during lessons and provide extra help or challenge when appropriate.
- Improve leadership by ensuring that:
 - urgent action is taken to improve teaching and raise standards in English and science
 - leaders effectively evaluate the impact of strategies designed to improve pupils' outcomes
 - leaders devise a curriculum that motivates all pupils at key stage 4 to deepen their learning and make good progress in all subjects that they study
 - middle leaders have the skills and expertise to lead the improvement of teaching in their areas of responsibility
 - the governing board has sufficient expertise to properly hold leaders to account for the school's performance
 - the pupil premium is spent effectively, so that disadvantaged pupils' progress improves.
- Raise standards in those A-level subjects where students achieve less well, by ensuring that:
 - teachers and leaders carefully check students' progress during Years 12 and 13
 - students who begin to fall behind are quickly provided with extra support to help them catch up.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 11 December 2019 to 12 December 2019

Evidence

Inspectors gathered evidence about the quality of education provided by the school. They scrutinised documents including leaders' plans to improve the school and records of governors' meetings. Inspectors met with a range of staff including the headteacher, assistant headteachers and curriculum leaders. Inspectors met with members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority and the diocese. Inspectors also reviewed the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe.

Inspectors met with pupils to talk about their experience of the school and reviewed their work in lessons. Inspectors visited lessons in a range of subjects including English, science and mathematics.

Context

The current headteacher was seconded to the school in February 2019. She took up her post permanently in October 2019. She was not working in the school at the time of the previous inspection. The rest of the leadership were in post during the last inspection. The membership of the governing body has changed significantly over the past year, and there is a new chair of governors. The new members of the governing body have substantial experience in education and school governance. This has strengthened the governing body.

A number of staff have left the school since the last inspection. Leaders have successfully appointed appropriately qualified staff to fill almost all of the teaching posts. Leaders are working collaboratively with other schools from within the same diocese.

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

Leaders have made improvements to the school in a number of areas since the previous inspection. The new headteacher, with support from the diocese and the local authority, has had a positive impact. The school is preparing to become an academy in the spring term of 2020. Leaders are planning for the school to join the St John Bosco multi academy company. There are plans in place for this to happen, but they have not been finalised yet.

The previous inspection report identified weaknesses in the quality of education. There were particular concerns around English and science, and the sixth form. The report also identified weaknesses in the way the curriculum had been adapted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities

(SEND), and the level of challenge for all pupils, including the most able.

Since the previous inspection, there have been some significant improvements in science. The department is benefiting from stronger leadership as well as support from the diocese. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and teachers share good practice. Topics are now taught in a logical way, and this helps pupils use the knowledge they have learned previously to help them in subsequent lessons.

There has not been the same level of improvement in English. The curriculum is not well planned or coordinated. Pupils in Year 10 study various texts in English. The texts are chosen randomly by their teachers. Leaders do not check which texts are being taught, or that they are pitched at an appropriate level. Also, they do not check that pupils understand the background of the texts. Pupils told us that the purpose of studying the texts was to be able to answer examination questions. Yet, they did not know who wrote them, or when they were written.

Leaders and teachers do not ensure that the work given to pupils, including the most able, is ambitious and challenging enough. Sometimes pupils are given work that is too easy for them, and this is preventing them from deepening their knowledge, and achieving as well as they should.

Leaders noticed that disadvantaged pupils were not achieving as well as they should. A recent review of how well this group of pupils were doing identified some basic elements that were not in place. For example, some teachers did not know who the disadvantaged pupils were, and the school did very little to engage with their parents. Leaders and teachers have responded positively to the review. There is now a clear plan in place to support these pupils.

The previous inspection report highlighted a need for leaders and teachers to provide better support for pupils with SEND. The curriculum has not been suitably designed, adapted, or developed to be ambitious and meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Support for pupils with SEND is not engrained in the school. Teachers do not have the information they need to help them plan lessons. They do not always know who the pupils with SEND are. This is because some of these pupils are not always identified as having particular needs. Moreover, even when pupils with SEND have been identified, they are not guaranteed to receive the support they need. This is because teachers do not always know what they need to help the pupils learn. Leaders are beginning to address this, and there are now weekly briefings to discuss SEND, led by a consultant who works part-time. However, this model is not sustainable. It is performing triage, rather than getting to the heart of the issue and ensuring that high-quality provision is embedded in the school.

There has been a significant improvement in the quality of education in the sixth form since the last inspection. The sixth form is led by the same team as it was before. However, they have been revitalised by the new headteacher and governors. Sixth-form leaders now know what they should be doing. Leaders and

governors check that they are doing the right things, and that what they are doing is working. Leaders have adapted and expanded the curriculum in the sixth form so that there is more choice for students. They have also ensured that all teachers in the sixth form have the specialist knowledge they need to teach courses well. Leaders help students to settle into the sixth form. This begins with taster sessions in Year 11 to help them choose an appropriate course. When students start Year 12, teachers check what they know and what they can do. They use this information to help them when they plan lessons. Teachers check how well pupils are doing at regular intervals so that they can identify any gaps in what pupils know or can do.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders are working hard to move the school forward. The new headteacher has made a very positive impact in a short space of time.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are pleased with the improvements they have made since the previous inspection, but they recognise that there is still more to do. Since the previous inspection, there has been a focus on strengthening leadership, including the governing body, and improving the quality of education. Leaders have been particularly keen to develop the curriculum at key stage 4, strengthen provision in the sixth form, and improve English and science.

Since the last inspection, an external review of governance has taken place. The governing body now includes governors with a wealth of experience in education. They have successfully addressed many of the concerns raised by the external review. Governors work well with the local authority and the diocese, who have helped them to identify how they could be more effective. Governors now check how well the school is doing. They check that staff receive training, and that they are equipped to provide a better standard of education. They also check that the decisions leaders make are right for pupils. Governors' meetings have changed. They are now more business-like, and new committees have been set up, including a committee to review staff performance and pay.

Governors check what leaders are doing to help disadvantaged pupils. They know that previously the additional money the school received for pupils eligible for the pupil premium was not used effectively. This group of pupils did not achieve as well as they should at the end of Year 11. Since the last inspection, a review of the pupil premium has been completed. Leaders have responded quickly to the review. Governors now make sure that leaders are spending the additional funding more effectively. This is already having an impact. Previously, some staff did not know who this group of pupils were. Now they do, and they are working hard to help them do well. This group of pupils are already doing better than they were previously.

Leaders recognise that pupils with SEND are not supported appropriately, and they are not doing well enough. Leaders know that there is much more to be done to ensure that this group of pupils receive an acceptable standard of education. At the moment, the system used to identify pupils with SEND is inefficient and inaccurate. And, when pupils with SEND are identified, they are not always given the support they need.

Leaders have developed and improved the curriculum. They recognise that to do well at key stage 4, pupils need a good foundation in key stage 3. They have recently extended key stage 3 from two years to three. When pupils move into key stage 4, they now have a wider range of subjects to choose from. Leaders recognise, however, that the range of subjects still does not suit everyone, with only a very limited range of vocational subjects on offer.

The quality of education is still not where it should be. There is too much variability in what pupils experience. The impact of subject leadership is inconsistent. There are some pockets of strength. Yet, in other areas, leaders are not coordinating the work of their departments well enough. They do not provide enough direction for staff and do not routinely check what they are doing. Staff are provided with support and training. Most of this comes from other schools within the diocese. However, some staff do not use the training they have received, and therefore staff training is not having the impact that it should.

During the inspection, we considered staff workload. Staff told us that leaders valued them, and understood the amount of work they do. Some staff felt that the amount of work they have to do has increased recently. However, they were quick to point out that this was because leaders were building systems and improving procedures that will reduce workload in the future.

A small number of pupils receive some, or all, of their education away from the school. Leaders make regular visits to check that pupils are safe and that their placements are suitable.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Governors are now more effective. They hold leaders to account for their work, and they ensure that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is being used effectively.
- Leaders have secured improvements in the sixth form. Students study appropriate courses, and staff regularly check that they have understood the work they have been given.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders have not put in place a whole-school system to support pupils with SEND. Leaders and teachers do not adapt the curriculum well to meet the needs of this group of pupils.
- Subject leaders are not as effective as they should be. There are too many inconsistencies in subject leadership. Some leaders do not coordinate the areas of the curriculum they are responsible for well enough.

External support

The school receives support from the diocese and local authority. The school is also receiving support from Saint Augustine's Teaching School, Bishop Milner Catholic College, and Saint John Wall Catholic School. A thorough review of governance has been undertaken, and governance has been strengthened as a result. A thorough review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding has also been undertaken, and this has had an equally positive impact. Disadvantaged pupils are benefiting from an improved quality of education. The school is preparing to join the St John Bosco Catholic multi academy company. The diocese and the local authority are supporting school leaders in this process.