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12 September 2023

David Terry  
Interim Head of School  
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Dear Mr Terry

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of University Collegiate School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 3 and 4 July 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in December 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the multi-academy trust (MAT), other staff and trustees, members of the interim advisory board (IAB), representatives of the local authority and of your other external partners, the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also met with groups of pupils and visited some lessons. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**University Collegiate School remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.**

**I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.**

## **The progress made towards the removal of special measures**

There have been substantial changes in leadership and governance at the school since the previous inspection. You were appointed as the interim head of school in February 2023, along with a new vice-principal. At the same time, trustees suspended the local governing body and established an IAB. The IAB has taken responsibility for governance of the school. Added to this, a considerable number of new teachers and subject leaders have been appointed recently, and the new MAT CEO took up his post on the day of the inspection. Given the pace and nature of these changes, you explained to me that your initial priorities have been to improve the arrangements for safeguarding, and pupils' behaviour. We agreed that these two areas, plus governance and pupils' wider personal development, would form the main areas of focus for the inspection.

You, other senior leaders and members of the IAB accept the weaknesses in the quality of education identified at the previous inspection. You also acknowledge that pupils were not benefiting from the distinctive education that befits a university technical college. However, the actions that you are taking speak clearly to your ambition to address this. In a relatively short time, you have successfully reorganised the structure and timetabling of the curriculum. This has laid the foundations for a stronger curriculum to be in place from September 2023. In particular, you have broadened the range of subjects in key stage 3. Pupils are now studying subjects equivalent in scope and ambition to the national curriculum. You recognise that it will still take time for pupils to experience the necessary depth of learning in these subjects. While this new curriculum is embedding, you understand that it is important for subject leaders to consider how to address the gaps in pupils' knowledge that remain as the legacy of the previous curriculum.

Subject leaders' expertise in curriculum design is not as strong as it should be. Work to improve this has begun in earnest. The IAB and trust board have supported leaders by commissioning high-quality external support. This support is providing much-needed opportunities to develop subject leaders' and teachers' curriculum understanding. However, some of the generic approaches that teachers have been using to deliver the curriculum up to now are not as effective as they could be. This is because the subject-specific content of the curriculum has not been finalised.

You and other leaders have prioritised delivering some elements of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Current pupils are gaining a deeper understanding of the importance of respecting one another. They are also increasingly learning how to keep themselves safe. Although this constitutes some improvements to pupils' PSHE development, you recognise that the journey of improvement in this area has only just begun.

Since taking decisive action to secure effective leadership and governance, the board of trustees has provided you with clear strategic direction. Trustees are more acutely aware of the weaknesses in the school than they have been in the past. They have appointed leaders and members of the IAB who have the necessary understanding and skills to bring about sustainable change. Key governance structures have been restored. This is

providing you and other leaders with the necessary oversight, support and challenge to help you to improve the school.

The action plans that you shared with me are thorough, detailed and appropriate. You have sensibly prioritised improving pupils' behaviour, well-being and safety because you know that these are fundamental to improving the conditions for pupils' learning. These areas have shown real signs of improvement. There is a palpable sense that everyone is invested in them. For example, there has been very little negativity from pupils around the introduction of new behaviour systems. Pupils who spoke with me were unanimous in their view that improved behaviour in lessons has already made their experience of school more positive.

A key focus during the inspection was to evaluate the extent to which current improvements are sustainable. At present, a great deal of responsibility falls to a small number of new or interim leaders. Some staff also expressed frustration in the lack of capacity for further improvements. However, trustees and executive leaders have a realistic, credible and measured approach to building capacity to improve the school further. They have forged strategic alliances with partners who will support leaders in the short term. Added to this, trustees and executive leaders are committed to making appropriate appointments to help to secure long-term improvements.

One of the most significant strides forward that you and your team have made in recent months has been to improve the arrangements for safeguarding. Safeguarding is now effective. You and other leaders have been determined in your approach to develop a culture of safeguarding in the school. Rigorous training has improved staff's understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. Furthermore, you have acted well on advice and support from the local authority. This has helped you to put robust systems in place for reporting and recording safeguarding concerns. Leaders now take swift and appropriate action to support pupils who may be at risk of harm. Processes to check the suitability of staff to work with children are now securely in place.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the IAB, the chair of the board of trustees and the CEO of the Quest MAT, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Bolton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Ben Hill  
**His Majesty's Inspector**