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Mr Stephen Capper
Interim Headteacher
Futures Community College
Southchurch Boulevard
Southend-on-Sea
SS2 4UY

Dear Mr Capper

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Futures Community College

Following my visit to your school on 4 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the school's senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body, college sponsor, the headteacher from a neighbouring school who is supporting the school and two representatives of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the last inspection, no significant changes have been made to student numbers or staffing.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Systematic procedures to manage the performance of teachers are now established. All teachers have clear targets to help the school to improve and plans are in place

to monitor the impact of their work. Lesson monitoring, learning walks and meetings with teachers and middle leaders are giving the interim headteacher a clearer view of where the school's strengths and weaknesses lie.

The deputy headteacher, seconded on a temporary, short-term basis from the local authority, has instigated new procedures to assess and monitor students' progress. This is at an early stage of development but the school now has data to show how well students are achieving in core subjects. There are plans to extend this to all subjects later this year. The school complies with the latest requirements for safeguarding.

Governors are knowledgeable and experienced but do not share a coherent view of what needs to be done to secure improvements to the whole school. There are three tiers of governance, including the school, the 'Prospects' 14 to 19 college and the Trust Board. It is unclear which group has overall responsibility for school improvement across all key stages, or how senior leaders will be supported and held to account for driving improvements. Governors ensure that the school works in partnership with the local authority but they have declined the offer of regular school improvement meetings led by local authority senior advisers.

The school's improvement plan is suitably designed to tackle the issues raised in the last inspection. It contains targets to enable senior leaders to gauge improvement but these are mostly summative, rather than incremental targets to measure the rate of improvement being made. The headteacher agreed to update targets at key milestones and forward the revised plan to Ofsted before the next monitoring visit.

The statement of action produced by the local authority requires significant strengthening. It lacks detail or measurable targets to hold the school to account for securing long-term improvements.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the school should commission a full external review of governance in order to make sure that the governing body at every level is able to contribute fully in supporting and challenging the school's leadership and management, and monitoring its impact on performance throughout all key stages. In addition, the governing body should reconsider the offer of additional support provided by the local authority.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Southend. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector