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Mrs Jen McIntosh
Headteacher
Laisterdyke Business and Enterprise College
Thornbury Road
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD3 8HE

Dear Mrs McIntosh

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Laisterdyke Business and Enterprise College, Bradford

Following my visit to your school on 5 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The college should take further action to:

- urgently commission the external review of governance so that all areas for improvement in relation to this aspect of leadership are quickly determined and addressed
- establish a clear base line for the college's current position in relation to teaching quality and students' attainment and progress from which improvement can be measured
- ensure all milestones in the action plan are quantified so the college's progress towards 'good' can be more accurately evaluated
- ensure targets for achievement in the sixth form take into account national measures of value added and other published outcomes
- make decisions regarding temporary senior leadership appointments so that the re-structuring of middle leadership roles and responsibilities can move forward quickly.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, a group of staff including some middle leaders, a representative of the Governing Body and a representative

of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The college's improvement plan was evaluated. I toured the college with three students and scrutinised a range of documents including your summary of actions taken since the inspection and records of the college's monitoring of teaching quality.

Context

Since the inspection, one Teach First teacher has left the college and a further six teachers are due to leave at the end of the autumn term. Eight teachers are currently absent long-term. Two teachers on temporary contracts have been appointed permanently. Seven staff will join the college in the new year, four of whom are taking up leadership posts. There are seven acting senior leaders in roles that have yet to be confirmed as permanent positions within the new senior leadership structure.

Main findings

You, other senior leaders and governors agreed with the findings of the inspection and recognised that the areas for development identified largely matched your own view of where improvement in the college was required. The college's plan for improvement is detailed and sets out the actions and impact expected on a termly basis as the college moves towards its next section 5 inspection. However, not all targets and milestones are precisely quantified making it harder to judge accurately whether improvements are being secured at a fast enough pace.

At the time of the inspection many of your senior and middle leaders were very new to post but, despite the relatively short amount of time that has elapsed, they have quickly developed into their respective roles and are already making effective contributions towards driving improvement. The approach to tackling areas for development is coherent and well-focused because you and your leaders with different areas of responsibility are working closely together. Systems to enable leaders to monitor students' behaviour and attendance which were introduced in September are becoming more embedded and there are early indications that targeted action with specific individuals is starting to improve attendance.

More frequent collections of student data and greater teacher accuracy in assessing students' attainment means your senior and middle leaders are able to identify and address underachievement more swiftly. The increased focus on monitoring the progress of different groups is enabling you to check more effectively if the needs of individual students are being better met. Raised expectations for students' progress are resulting in higher teacher expectations within the classroom and more challenge for all students, including those with the highest levels of prior attainment.

Class teachers are being held to account more rigorously for the progress of the students that they teach. This will be further supported by the planned changes to appraisal and the management of teacher's performance.

Staff I met with showed a clear understanding of the need to ensure all teaching is at least good across the college. Staff commented that training delivered in mixed-subject groups followed up by departmental time to discuss ideas is helping best practice to be shared and used more widely. Individual support plans and the use of coaching are proving a successful approach to supporting identified teachers to develop their practice. A recent learning walk carried out jointly by one of your senior leaders and a representative of the local authority

found some early signs that recent professional development sessions are having an impact in the classroom. While you feel most staff have willingly embraced the need for rapid change and shown a strong commitment to improving their practice you also feel that a small minority of teachers still need to fully 'sign-up' to this view. You have rightly identified that temporary senior leadership positions, several long-term staff absences and the few vacant posts remaining are barriers to bringing about rapid improvement in some subjects and areas of the college's work. Some actions taken at the start of term, for example, changes to the curriculum are still too recent to enable their impact to be determined.

The college's governing body recognises the need to improve its effectiveness and have already organised training to help increase their understanding of aspects such as college performance data and their role in monitoring and evaluation. Through more frequent visits into college they are beginning to gain a more in-depth knowledge of its work so they are better placed to ask more challenging questions. However, in other respects, governors have not taken swift enough action to support the college's improvement or improve their own effectiveness. For example, although some preparatory work has been carried out, governors have yet to decide when the external review of governance will take place and who will lead it.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide effective support and challenge. However, the local authority acknowledges that the college's reliance on the need for external help is gradually declining as the capacity of your senior and middle leaders is developing. Regular meetings with those responsible for, and involved in, the college's improvement are being used well to monitor progress and the impact of support. These meetings also ensuring support is adapted and matched to the college's changing needs. For example, additional expertise from the local authority is helping the college to meet the needs of the increasing number of students who are at early stage of learning to speak English. Periodic reviews of the college's progress through the Bradford Partnership are helpful in gathering additional first-hand evidence of the impact of actions you have taken. The judicious use of external consultants and specialist leaders in education are helping you to drive improvements in teaching and leadership more rapidly. The local authority has also usefully brokered school-to-school partnerships that are helping to develop both teaching and leadership practice in the college.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bradford.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Gueli
Her Majesty's Inspector