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

Dear Mrs McIntosh

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

Following my visit to your school on 2 April 2014 with Helen Storey Senior HMI, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of our visit. Thank you for the help you gave us 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 second 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.

The findings of this inspection will result in Ofsted carrying out a further monitoring visit or the bringing forward of the next section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, three representatives of the governing body, who are all members of the recently established 'governance leadership team', and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last monitoring inspection. We also spoke over the telephone with the National Leader of Governance (NLG) who has undertaken a review of the work of the governing body and provided support for the newly appointed Chair. We also observed the School Specific Monitoring Group meeting chaired by a member of the local authority and attended by representatives of the local authority, members of the senior leadership team and the Chair of the Governing Body.

Context

Since the monitoring inspection in the second half of the autumn term a new Chair and vice-chair of the governing body have been appointed. Three members of the governing body have resigned and one member has died. I understand that you, as Principal, have also recently resigned as a governor. One new parent governor has been appointed. A number of teaching staff posts, including some middle leadership roles, remain unfilled. Following this monitoring inspection, Bradford local authority have had an application for the establishment of an Interim Executive Board (IEB) at the college approved by the Department for Education. The Board will replace the governing body of the college.

Main findings

This inspection has raised serious concerns about the governance of the college, including the extent to which governors are focusing on monitoring the college's performance, particularly the achievement of students, and the effectiveness of governors' support for its improvement.

When the college had its section 5 inspection in September 2013, governors were judged to have a 'realistic view of the college's effectiveness based on its current performance'. Through scrutiny of documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, discussions with representatives of the governing body and conversations with senior leaders in the school it is apparent that governors' view of the college's performance is no longer secure. While governors who met with inspectors could recall some 'headline' information relating to students' achievement they showed a very limited understanding of the impact of teaching on the learning and progress of students in different subjects or for particular groups. For example, they were confident that the impact of the spending of the pupil premium funding was narrowing gaps in performance over time for students currently in Year 11; this view is incorrect despite accurate information being communicated through your reports to the governing body about the performance of this year group.

The governing body's relationship with you, your leadership team and the local authority has deteriorated markedly. This was clearly evident in the findings of this inspection and is noted in the external review of governance dated 20 March 2014. Actions by members of the governing body are increasingly undermining the capacity of senior leaders and slowing decision making, in part, because governors are becoming too involved in operational matters. The capacity of the governing body to be strategic is being reduced further because they are mired in managing grievance and other human resource issues.

Governors have been slow to establish a clear link between the quality of teaching, the progress students make and teachers' salary progression: a policy has only been in place since January 2014 and it is not yet fully implemented. Similarly, a very long-standing staffing issue has still not been concluded. Some progress has been

made since the last monitoring inspection with regard to senior leadership roles as four temporary posts have been made permanent. The planned review and re-structure of middle leadership roles and support staff is, however, still not underway.

It is a concern that some recent procurement decisions by the governing body have not followed agreed financial procedures. For example, a recent significant strategic decision to change the college's provider of legal advice was not discussed or agreed by the full governing body and the governors who met with us were unable to demonstrate how they had ensured 'best value' in this decision.

The governing body has received feedback from many external sources including, the Ofsted monitoring inspection in the autumn term, the local authority and from the NLG which have all highlighted weaknesses in governance. While there have been modest improvements in a few respects, there is very little evidence that this feedback has been systematically considered and robustly addressed by the full governing body or its committees to improve the quality and impact of their work. Overall, evidence shows that the effectiveness of governance in the college has declined since the last section 5 inspection.

You, your leadership team and staff have continued the determined drive to improve the quality of teaching in the college and accelerate students' progress. GCSE predictions for 2014 indicate standards are set to rise overall, although, improvement is not consistent for all groups. Your leadership team is confident about these predictions because past inaccuracies in teachers' assessment of students' performance have been addressed. Analysis of Year 11 mock examination papers is being used carefully to provide additional teaching for targeted students so that gaps in their knowledge or understanding are quickly filled. Better quality teaching across the college is also having a positive impact on students' progress during Key Stage 3; these students are on track to start their Key Stage 4 studies in a much stronger position than previous cohorts.

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