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19 June 2015

Mark Rhatigan
Kingsbury School and Sports College
Kingsbury Road
Erdington
Birmingham
B24 8RE

Dear Mr Rhatigan

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kingsbury School and Sports College

Following my visit with Jeremy Seymour and Matthew Grantham, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 17–18 June 2015, 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 which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. Before appointments can be made, this must firstly be discussed with me.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford

Her Majesty's Inspector

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:
CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk
- The lead and team inspectors.

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2013

- Make teaching at least consistently good, in all subjects, by ensuring that teachers:
 - set stimulating work in lessons at the right level of difficulty to engage students
 - frequently check the progress made by students during lessons and amend activities when needed to ensure a good pace of learning is maintained
 - mark books regularly, ensuring that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to reach and exceed their targets, and have time to respond to the advice given.

- Raise achievement, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that the work set challenges students of all ability levels to aim higher
 - improving the support for pupils eligible for the pupil premium
 - ensuring that disabled students and those who have special educational needs have the right resources and are set appropriate work.

- Eliminate low-level disruption and poor behaviour in lessons and around the school, by ensuring that staff are consistent in the way they use strategies to manage behaviour.

- Ensure the range of subjects and courses offered matches the needs and interests of all students, by ensuring that:
 - sufficient attention is given to creative subjects
 - the courses students study on other sites are properly monitored
 - checks are made on how pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is provided.

- Raise attendance rates by promoting the importance of regular attendance to students and their parents and carers.

- Improve subject leadership where it has weaknesses, and ensure assessment data are accurate across all subjects.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 17–18 June 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, groups of students, teachers, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and representatives from the school's preferred sponsor. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since my last visit, a significant number of new staff have been employed by the school. These include a deputy headteacher with responsibility for behaviour, an assistant headteacher, a head of information and communication technology, a head of house, and a lead practitioner in mathematics. These, along with a number of other appointments, have substantially reduced the number of supply staff in the school. A restructure of support staff in the school has been recently agreed and leaders are currently working with the local authority to reorganise the leadership team to improve lines of accountability.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The focus on improving rates of progress noted at the last monitoring visit is beginning to bear fruit. Over the last four months, the school's records suggest that progress in all years and for all groups of students has accelerated. Consequently, you expect that the number of students achieving five GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics, will be above floor standards this year, representing a significant improvement compared to 2014. Nevertheless, you and your leaders are very aware that there is more work to be done, particularly to secure long-term, sustained improvement.

You and your leaders know that sustained improvement can only be achieved by addressing the need to improve progress from the moment students enter the school. You have therefore avoided the pitfall of focusing all efforts on those further up the school. As a result, your monitoring records are showing recent rapid improvements in progress for all year groups. This suggests that the better expected outcomes noted above will be sustained and improved further as greater progress in Key Stage 3, is built upon in Key Stage 4.

Although gaps in progress for disadvantaged students are narrowing in most year groups, this remains variable across years and subjects. For instance, in Year 11, disadvantaged students are making slightly better progress than others in both English and mathematics. However, in Year 10, there is a significant discrepancy between disadvantaged students and others in the numbers making expected progress in mathematics; whereas, in Year 8, the greater gap is in English. We

agreed that leaders therefore need to ensure that close monitoring and analysis clearly identifies which actions have had a positive impact and how those can be replicated across both core subjects in all year groups. Plans are already in place to address this and you expect to implement these imminently.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is now improving. One of the major reasons for this is the action taken by leaders to address the previously high numbers of supply staff in the school through the appointment of permanent members of staff. Consequently, only three supply staff remain in school compared to 17 at the last visit. Students are very appreciative of this and say that the quality of teaching has improved notably as a result.

All staff are now employing the 'non-negotiable' systems and strategies you have put in place. For instance, in all lessons visited, teachers presented their 'active files' with clear evidence of planning that is increasingly meeting the standards set by the school. Literacy development and support are now features of teaching in nearly all subjects and there is an increasingly strong acknowledgement of the importance of literacy in all aspects of school life, although numeracy is less well developed. The 'first time, every time' routines are being used effectively to ensure that learning begins on entry to the classroom and that students leave in a calm and orderly manner, which supports them in moving on to the next lesson ready for further learning. Frequent checks by leaders, followed by feedback to teachers, ensure that this is embedded across the school.

Marking and assessment have improved. In all books seen by inspectors, work was marked regularly and, in the majority of cases, useful comments were made to help students understand how to improve. Assessment is now accurate and this is improving the timeliness of additional support provided for those students who are not making as much progress as they should. We discussed the need for teachers to now make better use of such information to inform planning for lessons, particularly with regard to providing appropriate levels of challenge for students' different abilities. We also agreed middle leaders should begin to use assessment outcomes to identify where there may be weaknesses in teaching or gaps in schemes of work delivered.

Where learning was most effective, inspectors noted that teachers planned their lessons carefully, based on a good knowledge of the starting points of their students. In these cases, challenge was appropriately matched to students' abilities and teachers were confident to adapt their plans if required. This was particularly the case in some English, science and mathematics lessons. Where teaching was less effective, teachers were overly reliant on the whole-school lesson planning format so that they were attempting to include too many foci in a single session rather than over a sequence of lessons.

The morale of the teaching staff is much improved compared to my last visit. Teachers say that they feel challenged but also supported. Inspectors noted a team spirit that had not been present during previous visits. Those spoken to said they felt that leaders had provided a clear vision for improvement and provided them with the structures and strategies needed to get there. This is reflected in the decrease in staff absence and in the good relationships between teachers and students.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour has improved significantly since the last monitoring inspection. This is particularly the case with behaviour for learning. Students are much more compliant and respond quickly to teachers' requests. Inspectors saw no instances of defiance or disrespectful behaviour during lessons or around the school. Students say, and inspectors agree, that disruption of lessons is now rare. They express their appreciation that they can learn more effectively as a result and that learning is now seen by the vast majority of students as the main business of the school. This is because all staff are applying the systems and processes that have been put in place, including the behaviour policy. As a result, students know exactly what the expectations are, which behaviours will bring sanctions and which will bring rewards.

Students are very aware of the school's 'zero tolerance' of violence and defiance. They spoke to inspectors about the impact of recent fixed-term exclusions on other students in the school and the message these sent to those students who were finding it difficult to comply with the higher expectations now in place. The school's records of poor behaviour show that after the initial 'spike' in February and March, such incidents are now reducing in both frequency and gravity, in line with the reduction in exclusions. Nonetheless, we agreed that fixed-term exclusions are still too high and this is a priority for leaders, who expect further reductions next term.

There has been a recent review of safeguarding procedures in the school, and this has further improved the systems in place. The school works closely with the local authority and other agencies, including the police. Checks are carried out for all students who are taken off the school roll and these are recorded rigorously. In the majority of cases, where the student's destination is known, the school ensures all relevant information is passed on. Where a destination cannot be ascertained by the school, contact is made with the local authority who carry out searches and inform the school of outcomes.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The new leadership team has done everything it can to accelerate the progress of the school. Led by you, and well supported by the preferred sponsor currently providing school-to-school support, the systems and processes being established at the time of my last visit are now beginning to have an impact. As a result, although in the past the school has struggled to make progress, this is now being rectified.

The additional appointments to the leadership team of an assistant and a deputy headteacher have further increased leaders' capacity to drive forward the improvements required. The successful focus on improving behaviour and attitudes to learning, noted above, remains a strong focus in all your work, reflected in the responsibilities allocated to new members of the leadership team.

Much work has been done by leaders to improve the quality of teaching. There is a rigorous programme of induction for teachers new to the school and a carefully phased programme of whole-school improvement of teaching which focused initially on establishing effective structures and emphasising key strategies to check students' understanding. This has been accompanied by appropriate training and support, and is now largely embedded in everyday practice. The current focus on improving teachers' use of information about students' progress is beginning to have an impact.

Very regular monitoring of the quality of teaching is improving leaders' ability to rapidly identify underperformance and to provide targeted support and training. Increasingly, you and your leaders are using the full range of evidence to make judgements about the quality of teaching to ensure that self-evaluation is more accurate. We agreed that it would be useful to consider the ways in which all evidence gathered about teaching is collated and assessed to further improve accuracy.

After a period of stagnation, an interim executive board (IEB) was formally constituted by the local authority on 1 June this year. The first meeting of the board took place on the first day of this inspection. Two members of the school's governing body have transferred to the board, including the Chair of the Governing Body, who is now Chair of the Interim Executive Board. The board has an appropriate range of experience and expertise. However, since February, a lack of adequate communication from the local authority led to confusion about the status of the existing governing body. Although the consequence has been a lack of strategic leadership at this level during the interim period, school leaders have not allowed the situation to become a barrier to moving forward.

External support

There has been regular monitoring of the school's progress by the local authority since the school was placed in special measures. Support from Human Resources has been helpful. However, decision making with regard to the leadership of the school, including the creation of an interim executive board, has been slow to come to fruition. Historically, this has had a negative impact on the school's ability to move forward as quickly as it should have done.

There has been good support for safeguarding from the local authority. However, Prevent training has only taken place very recently.

Support from the school's preferred sponsor has been highly focused and effective. The multi academy trust has provided a strong strategic direction, which has been particularly important during the confusion surrounding governance. Rigorous monitoring and challenge on a weekly basis are ensuring that improvement is a continuous process and that priorities are reviewed and evaluated appropriately.