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Mr Alastair McKenzie
Principal
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Dear Mr McKenzie

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kings College Guildford

Following my visit with Stuart Edwards, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 6 and 7 December 2017, 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 that have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in December 2016. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint one newly qualified teacher.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the executive working group, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Moles
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2016.

- Increase the impact of leadership and management by:
 - improving the accuracy of self-evaluation so that it focuses rigorously on the impact of the school's work on pupils' progress in all year groups
 - ensuring that improvement plans have clear targets and success criteria that can be measured at certain points in the year so that governors and leaders can monitor progress more accurately
 - holding teachers to account for pupils' achievement in all key stages
 - ensuring that governors use a wider range of information on which to challenge leaders on outcomes for pupils in all year groups
 - ensuring that oversight provided by the sponsoring trust is sharply focused on outcomes, in particular in English and science and for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and boys.
- Urgently improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and boys by:
 - ensuring that work in lessons is appropriately challenging for them
 - making regular and accurate checks on how well they are doing
 - monitoring the impact of the pupil premium grant on disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment regularly, rigorously and against other pupils nationally
 - ensuring that their attendance rates at least match national averages for all pupils.
- Improve outcomes in English and science so that rates of achievement at least match national averages by ensuring that teaching:
 - creates a culture that actively promotes a love of reading
 - improves pupils' progress in key stage 3, so that they are well prepared for their GCSE courses.
- Improve behaviour by:
 - eliminating low-level disruption in lessons
 - ensuring that pupils conduct themselves well in corridors and playgrounds, and that they do not use homophobic or derogatory language.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 6 December 2017 to 7 December 2017

Evidence

The main focus of the visit was to evaluate developments in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, although other areas for improvement from the last inspection were also considered. Inspectors met with the principal, senior leaders and groups of staff and pupils. They met separately with representatives from the executive working group (governing body), the Guildford Education Partnership multi-academy trust and the parent forum group. Along with school leaders, they visited 16 lessons to observe learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. They also worked alongside two middle leaders to review a sample of work from pupils in Years 8 and 10. Inspectors evaluated a range of documents, including the school's 'action, impact, next steps' plan, records of how leaders check the quality of teaching, and reports from visits by the executive working group, the trust and the Department for Education. They considered leaders' recruitment checks on staff, and information relating to pupils' attendance, behaviour and academic performance.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, two senior leaders have joined the school on a year-long secondment. One member of staff has joined the senior leadership team, and another has returned to a full-time teaching role. Leadership arrangements have changed in mathematics and science. Three other teachers have joined the school, including a lead practitioner in science. A primary specialist teacher from the trust is providing coaching support for staff, as well as literacy support for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. There have been a number of other personnel changes among the support staff. The school day has been adapted to introduce longer lessons. The house system has been restructured to form key stage teams that oversee pupils' pastoral, academic and special educational needs.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders are determined to make rapid improvements, and are ambitious in their aspirations for the school to quickly be judged good by Ofsted. They know what this will look like, and the ongoing actions that will help them to secure further necessary improvements. The work they have done over the past year to raise expectations for pupils' behaviour and learning is evident in the changing culture across the school. Leaders recognise that there is much still to be achieved, but have secured a notable shift in pupils' attitudes that is enabling them to routinely learn more successfully than in the past.

Leaders' 'impact, action, next steps' plan helps them to remain focused on relevant areas for school improvement. It supports the executive working group (EWG) and

the trust in holding senior leaders to account for the difference their work is making to standards in the school. Actions and success criteria linked to improving pupils' outcomes are currently less well-developed than other parts of the plan. This, in part, reflects the recent changes that leaders have made to how they assess and track pupils' progress. While appropriately designed to make teachers' assessments more valid and useful as a tool for future learning, this tracking system is in the early stages of being put in place. As such, it currently impedes the clarity with which leaders, including the EWG and the trust, can identify whether improvements in pupils' outcomes are rapid enough.

Useful systems help leaders to make careful checks on the quality of teaching across the school. Formal lesson observations are complemented with learning walks, book looks, progress reviews and pupil conferencing. The EWG and trust support and contribute to this monitoring process. Feedback from these activities is shared with relevant staff, and used effectively by leaders to put appropriate whole-school and personalised training in place. Staff value the feedback and support they receive, which is improving the consistency and quality of teaching in the school.

Leaders make effective use of their working partnership with the University of Surrey. The vast majority of pupils have now participated in a subject-linked event, either in school or at the university, or have been supported by undergraduates who help at the school's homework club or with reading activities. Pupils now engage more keenly with these opportunities, which raise their aspirations and awareness of future possibilities. These events are also helping to engage an increasing proportion of parents in the life of the school, although there is further work to do in this respect.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Since the last monitoring visit, successful work has improved the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment across the school, including in the focus areas of English and science. Leaders have a clear vision for developing effective teaching, and have provided staff with useful training, guidance and structure which is helping to achieve this.

Leaders' decision to change the structure of the school day has, after some initial trepidation, been received positively by pupils and staff. Teachers now use a consistent approach to planning work that helps pupils to build on their learning over a sustained period, both during a lesson and over time. They structure tasks carefully, and sometimes use questioning well to check pupils' knowledge and extend their thinking. However, planned learning does not always build precisely on pupils' prior knowledge, skills and understanding. Consequently, pupils do not routinely make the rapid progress needed from their typically low starting points, or to make up for the legacy of less-effective teaching in the past.

Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved notably, as a result of teachers' raised expectations. Around the school, lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils now expect

to work hard and come to school equipped for learning. They value having the time to complete their work, which improves their self-esteem as well as their knowledge and understanding. They typically show care and pride in their work, and complete homework regularly. Their work shows that they are making progress over time, although this progress is not routinely rapid enough to accelerate their attainment towards standards seen nationally. While pupils often receive encouraging feedback about their work, leaders recognise that pupils do not necessarily apply what teachers tell them to improve the quality of their work across the curriculum.

Leaders have taken useful steps to raise the profile of reading throughout the school. Pupils now have regular opportunities during tutor time to read individually or aloud in groups, which encourages positive habits and seeks to develop a love of reading. Those who most need to improve their reading have the chance to read aloud with an adult. Consequently, leaders' checks show that pupils in Years 8 and 9 now have reading ages which are increasing more rapidly than their chronological ages. However, a notable proportion of pupils do not currently read at the level expected for their age.

Staff absence rates are low, which is helping to stabilise pupils' learning experiences in lessons. Staff know pupils well, and work sensitively with them to improve their confidence alongside their subject knowledge and skills. Leaders support effective teachers in developing their wider subject knowledge, so that they can teach across a number of subject areas. This helps to provide pupils with a consistently positive learning experience across a range of subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders' work to develop pupils' behaviour for learning has been determined and successful. This is evident in pupils' organisation, receptiveness to teachers' instructions in lessons, and engagement with the recently raised expectations for homework. The positive relationships between pupils and staff are clear, and contribute to the calm and orderly atmosphere around the school.

Seconded senior leaders contribute usefully to the school's work to improve attendance and behaviour. Attendance figures remain below the national average, but are improving steadily over time. There is still a notable proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school. Leaders recognise the need to be persistent and tenacious in their work to ensure that all pupils come to school regularly. The number of behaviour incidents logged has recently increased. However, this reflects higher expectations for pupils' behaviour and work, rather than a deterioration in pupils' behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Outcomes by the end of Year 11 declined further in 2017. While not entirely unexpected, they were clearly disappointing, and did not match the predictions staff

made about pupils' achievement closely enough. Leaders have reflected on this variation, and adapted their approach to assessment as a result. The new system aims to improve how precisely teachers identify how well pupils are doing, and to sharpen how successfully leaders direct extra help towards those who most need to catch up. Early indications suggest that information about pupils' current progress and attainment is more accurate than in the past, matching the quality of work seen in pupils' books. Staff work together and with support from colleagues across the trust to check their assessments are accurate. They meet regularly to discuss pupils whose progress they are concerned about, to share effective strategies and identify where extra help is needed. This helps leaders to direct additional support more effectively than has previously been the case.

Valid performance information from the start of the academic year shows that pupils in the upper part of the school are achieving well below what might be expected for their age in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils currently achieving at least grade 4 in English, mathematics and science is well below what might be expected from pupils' starting points. There are signs that pupils are beginning to make more secure progress than in the past, but there is a long way to go, and progress is not currently rapid enough to help them catch up from their weaker past attainment by the end of the academic year. Pupils in Year 9 are also underachieving considerably in mathematics. Standards are higher for pupils in the lower part of the school, with a larger proportion of pupils achieving in line with their targets in English, mathematics and science.

Leaders' information about how well pupils, including the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, are achieving in their other subjects is less clear. This is because leaders are currently awaiting the outcomes of a first round of assessment that was taking place around the time of this visit. However, work in pupils' books shows pupils to be making progress across their range of subjects, building more securely on previous learning than was the case in the past. Pupils complete tasks with care, and develop their understanding and skills over time. They benefit from regular opportunities to apply their learning, such as by completing number problems in mathematics and writing in different genres in English. Leaders recognise that, while progress is clearly evident in pupils' work, teachers' expectations for what pupils can achieve are not always high enough, which risks impeding their rates of progress over time.

External support

The Guildford Education Partnership trust continues to provide effective support to the school, both practically and strategically. It sets aspirational targets for what pupils should achieve by the end of Year 11. Trust colleagues visit regularly to check the progress pupils are making over time and to see how the quality of teaching is improving. They work closely with school leaders and the EWG to identify where the limited capacity in this small school can be complemented effectively by working with colleagues from other schools across the trust. They also

facilitate the appointment of high-quality teachers and leaders to the school. This strengthens leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching, and helps to hold school leaders effectively to account for how quickly they are raising standards in the school.

The trust's practice development leader provides useful coaching support to teachers who school leaders identify would benefit from it to improve their practice. She shares information about her work openly with school leaders, so that they can maintain an overview of what is working well and what needs to improve, and plan future training appropriately. Staff value this coaching support, and are receptive to advice about how to develop the quality of their teaching. They make effective use of opportunities to work with colleagues in other schools across the trust, sharing best practice and developing the accuracy of assessment through looking at pupils' work together. The combined effect of this range of development work is that teaching is becoming increasingly effective across the school, although there is further work to do to ensure that it is consistently good.