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Matthew Parr-Burman
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Dear Mr Parr-Burman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Carisbrooke College

Following my visit to your school on 18 December 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- strengthen the school's work on improving behaviour and attitudes to learning, by developing pupils' sense of responsibility and confidence as learners
- ensure that interventions designed to support current Year 11 pupils' attainment and progress lead to improved outcomes in the 2019 examinations
- improve the consistency of teaching and learning in science
- insist that the sensible strategies to improve teaching and pupils' behaviour are consistently followed and sustained by all staff.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders and a group of staff. I met with a group of governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing

body. A meeting was held with the school improvement partner from the local authority. I observed teaching and learning in a range of subjects and year groups, accompanied by the executive headteacher. I met formally with a representative group of pupils in Years 9 and 10, as well as speaking to pupils in lessons and looking at their work. I observed pupils during break and visited a library lesson. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's improvement plan, reports from the local authority and records of the work of governors.

Context

You took up your post in January 2018, providing leadership across the federation of Carisbrooke and Medina colleges. From September 2018, you have focused on leading Carisbrooke College as substantive headteacher, following a restructure of leadership across the federation and the departure of the then head of school. A number of senior staff hold leadership roles across the federation.

Main findings

Leaders and governors now have an accurate view of the school's performance and current position. They agree that some valuable time was lost in the months following the last inspection and are acutely aware that improvements are urgent. As a result, you have implemented sharply focused and realistic plans to improve the school at all levels of leadership. These plans are carefully monitored and checked to see if they have having the necessary impact on pupils' progress and attainment. Early signs are positive. The school is a happier and more cohesive community, with shared higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they behave.

The development of teaching has been a major undertaking for leaders. Teachers are more willing to share their work. You have made sure that opportunities for them to learn from each other are built into the school day. Teachers' loyalty to the school, and their confidence and openness to guidance, have increased because of the healthier and more positive atmosphere you have nurtured.

Pupils are now achieving more in lessons. The school's own assessment of progress demonstrates that pupils are being better prepared for public examinations. The 2018 examination results were disappointing, but not wholly surprising. They are proof of a history of weak teaching, low expectations of behaviour, and staff absence. Consequently, you are wisely making sure that the current Year 11 pupils have all the support they need to achieve better results in their GCSE examinations. The legacy of previous poor performance shows itself in current pupils' lack of belief in their own ability. However, there are strong signs that teachers are working more intelligently and sensitively to develop pupils' confidence. I saw evidence of better questioning in some lessons, particularly when teachers patiently insisted upon pupils giving thoughtful and well-explained answers. In these cases, pupils demonstrated increased self-assurance and could convey their reasoning and

understanding. Nevertheless, pupils' responses and confidence as learners are still not strong, and this area is rightly a target for improving their progress and attainment.

Pupils do not always use time well in lessons. When high expectations are not insisted upon, pupils' concentration flags. Some give up and just wait to be helped. They have not had enough guidance about how to take more responsibility for their work or how to solve problems on their own. Instead, in some cases, teachers work harder than the pupils, leading to overdependence at best, and laziness or diffidence at worst. One pupil told me, 'They either do it *for* you, or you don't get any help at all.' This view is not evident where teaching is improving, but there are still areas where teaching is not yet good enough.

A common approach to making sure that pupils' needs are taken into account is becoming more consistent across the school. Information about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is helpful, sufficiently detailed and aspirational. The most able pupils appreciate that more is expected of them, but in some cases their attitudes to learning and lack of confidence hold them back.

To improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils is now a priority. You and your leadership team are taking a more diagnostic and personalised approach to the needs of this group of pupils. More precise assessment is enabling leaders to identify exactly whether disadvantaged pupils really have lower academic ability or whether they have just underachieved during their education so far. As a result, teachers and leaders are planning more challenging and inspiring topics and teaching. Some of the work to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils remains at an early stage, but recent assessments and the school's evaluations show that these pupils are doing better.

You and your team have been honest in your evaluation of teaching in science. There have been some improvements in this area, and the department is now more stable and secure. However, the quality of teaching in science remains an area of weakness. Pupils told me about variability in their experience across the separate science subjects. Their comments and attitudes to learning suggest that they are not yet fully committed to their studies in science. Some are not used either to the requirements of practical work or to how to usefully record notes for their own revision.

Following the last inspection, you have invested in an experienced and well-qualified librarian who has made a good start on overhauling the way that reading is promoted. Pupils now benefit from dedicated library lessons, which in general are respected and enjoyed by pupils. Certainly, pupils are now reading more often and widening their reading repertoire. Pupils are expected to have a reading book as part of their equipment and there are set times devoted to reading during the school day. Nevertheless, you have rightly identified that there is more work to do to ensure that all pupils habitually read and enjoy a full range of high-quality texts.

Behaviour is improving, both during and outside of lessons. Pupils believe that behaviour generally is better across the school. Your recent survey shows that staff consider behaviour to have significantly improved. The new positive behaviour management policy is having a pleasing impact, both on exclusion rates overall and on the number of low-level disruptions to learning. During this monitoring inspection, pupils conducted themselves calmly and appropriately during a very wet and cold lunchtime. Very few needed reminders about their behaviour during lessons. However, expectations and application of the school behaviour policy are still patchy in some areas. The view of pupils is still that 'it depends on the teacher'. Pupils' attendance shows a slight increase over time and is heading in the right direction. Nevertheless, improving attendance and reducing persistent absence remain a top priority for the school.

The improvements identified in governance at the last inspection have been strengthened. Governors are more knowledgeable about their role and are more ambitious for the school. They are in a better position to challenge you and your leadership team. They feel more confident about the information they receive about the school's performance. Governors have learned from previous errors and have made sure that their training and expertise have been developed to prevent mistakes being made again.

External support

The school benefits from focused and comprehensive support from the local authority's school improvement partner. This has been particularly valuable with the restructuring of leadership roles across the federation and the strengthened governing body. Hampshire local authority has also supported the school with improving provision for pupils with SEND and providing specialist subject advisors in English, history, science and geography. As a result, these department areas have put together sensible and ambitious plans for improvement

The federation with Medina College has also enabled the school to share good practice across both schools and provide staff with additional insights and objective assessment of the impact of improvements.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for the Isle of Wight. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector