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20 November 2014

Mr Peter Shaw
Headteacher
Carisbrooke College
Mountbatten Drive
Newport
PO30 5QU

Dear Mr Shaw

Special measures monitoring inspection of Carisbrooke College

Following my visit with Victor Chaffey and Stephanie Matthews, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 18 and 19 November 2014, 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 March 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 appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high enough expectations of students
 - use information from assessments to plan work that matches the full range of abilities and actively engages all students in learning
 - check students' understanding as lessons progress and adapt their teaching when necessary to enable all students to make progress
 - manage students' behaviour more effectively so that students are focused on their learning and no one is able to interrupt or disrupt the lesson
 - improve the quality and regularity of marking and feedback so that students are clear about what they need to do to make progress and are given time to respond to teachers' comments.
- Raise students' achievement and enable all to make better progress and to close the gaps in achievement between different learners by:
 - closely checking students' performance to identify any underachievement and rapidly giving support to those students who are in danger of falling behind
 - ensuring that all students are actively involved in lessons and have opportunities to learn through group work and by themselves
 - ensuring that procedures for setting targets for students' achievement underpin high expectations and are consistent across the school.
- Improve students' behaviour and safety by:
 - ensuring that teachers and other adults supervise students effectively and are responsible for them at all times, including during fire drills
 - ensuring that teachers and other adults do not ignore any poor or unsafe behaviour outside of lessons and take appropriate action to deal with it.
- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - ensuring that leaders' roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clear so that the variation in effectiveness of both senior and middle leadership is eradicated
 - ensuring that all senior and subject leaders consistently check the quality of teaching, marking and progress of different groups of students with equal rigour
 - ensuring that teachers are provided with precise and thorough feedback about their performance and checking that the advice given is followed, in order to improve teaching
 - providing high-quality training and support that enable teachers to improve their teaching and to plan effective lessons matched to students' ages and abilities, holding teachers in all subjects strongly to account for the quality of their teaching, assessment, behaviour management and how well students achieve
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels act swiftly when the need for improvement is identified

- ensuring that the effectiveness of the work of the governing body is evaluated and that it makes a demonstrable impact on school improvement.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 November 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of staff, senior and middle leaders, groups of students, parents, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body. The Chair of the Governing Body was on leave at the time of the inspection.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, 28 members of staff have left the school, including one of the deputy headteachers. 13 new members of staff have joined.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Students' attainment in July 2014 at the end of Key Stage 4 was disappointing compared to national averages. Not enough students achieved five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. This was a surprise to the school. In particular, results in English had been forecast inaccurately, though a majority of other subjects had also overestimated students' likely performance. Results in mathematics, however, were closer to expectations so that over half the students achieved a grade C or higher. In seven other GCSE subjects, attainment was higher than in 2013. In new subjects, such as engineering and health and social care, results were impressive. Students studying for BTEC vocational qualifications also achieved good results. Students in Year 11 entered the school with below average attainment. These students, therefore, made at least good progress in many subjects during their time at school.

In lessons, students are achieving more because teaching is better. Work in books is improving. Students take more care over the presentation of their work. Increasing numbers of students respond well to teachers' questions. In a biology lesson, students accurately used difficult scientific vocabulary which they had learnt in previous lessons. In creative subjects, students apply the skills they have already learned in new pieces of work. This shows good progress.

The school has doubled the frequency with which it collects information about students' progress. This rigorous assessment is necessary to ensure that teachers have accurate information about current attainment and rates of progress. Sensible systems are developing to enable teachers to compare the standards of students' work with others locally. As a result, teachers are able to identify any likely underachievement more quickly. Students who require additional support receive it in a more timely manner.

Achievement is also improving because a majority of teachers are setting higher expectations for their students. Since the last monitoring visit, there has been a further shift towards a 'can-do' attitude and this is helping students believe in themselves. There are, however, some areas of the school where the impact of this is less clear and significant weaknesses remain. Performance in science and English, for example, is still too variable.

Subject leaders are clear that in written examinations, students did less well on those questions where they had to provide longer written answers. Students did not write enough to gain all the possible marks. Subject leaders are tackling this by providing better opportunities for students to practise extended writing in lessons. They are working with pastoral leaders to raise students' levels of confidence so that they make the best use of time in examinations.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving. More teachers are planning appropriate lessons. They are checking more frequently how well students are learning during lessons. When students are stuck, an increasing number of teachers confidently stop what they are doing and explain the work again. In the best lessons, teachers question students effectively to deepen their understanding. The most effective teachers use good quality resources and methods to enable students' learning.

Teachers now have lots of useful information about students. Many use this effectively to prepare resources which meet students' needs. Weaker teachers still provide the same work for all students. Often the work is not hard enough for more able students or is too difficult for others. There are still some teachers who fail to challenge robustly students who are not self-motivated to learn.

Marking is improving. In a majority of classes, books are marked regularly and with increasing frequency. In geography, opportunities are provided at the beginning of every lesson for students to reflect on their work and make any necessary improvements. In mathematics, students are provided with clear feedback and are encouraged to act on it immediately. There are, however, still a significant minority of teachers who do not mark regularly enough despite clear school policies.

Teaching assistants provide effective support for many of the students. The most effective are those who plan with the class teacher what they will do before the lesson. There are still too many who work exclusively with one student, rather than support learning more generally in the class.

Teachers are increasingly using subject experts from the local authority to help secure their judgements on the quality of students' work. Work with teachers at Medina College, the school's federation partner, is beginning to enable staff to become more precise in knowing what their students know, understand and can do.

Teachers also use the information to track effectively the progress of different groups of students. This enables them to act decisively to ensure any gaps begin to close.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour continues to improve. Fewer students are excluded now, due to leaders' effective actions to improve behaviour. Conduct around the extensive site is improving because more teachers are taking responsibility to supervise and challenge behaviour robustly if necessary. Fewer lessons are disrupted. The school's 'on-call' system is mainly used well to deal with any individual students who do not cooperate with teachers. The headteacher is a frequent, visible presence around the site. He interacts constantly with students, praising the things they do well and challenging anything that is less good. This leadership provides a strong model for the rest of the staff.

Students in Key Stage 4 say that behaviour has improved recently. Students in Key Stage 3 say that there is still some poor behaviour when teaching is not good. They say the school teaches them how to stay safe, including in online settings.

Attendance continues to improve, as does punctuality to school and to lessons. This is the result of well-managed and consistently followed procedures. There is improving consistency in the standard of school uniform. Teachers more readily challenge students about this when standards do not match the school's expectations.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leadership at all levels is improving. The headteacher has worked tirelessly to tackle the remaining pockets of weak performance. In September 2014, he put in place a much stronger performance management process. Teachers now have their work checked more frequently. Leaders take into account, through rigorous checking, the effectiveness of marking and rate of students' progress in each teacher's classes. They continue to gather accurate information about the quality of teaching by skilfully observing lessons. Only good and consistent performance is rewarded. Middle leaders are asked to account accurately for students' progress in the subjects they manage. The headteacher has also led effectively necessary changes to enable the accurate assessment of students' achievement. This process was not good enough previously.

Senior leaders are adjusting appropriately their areas of responsibility. They have rightly recognised the need to improve their checking of achievement information so that it is accurate. They have maintained well their focus on improving teaching across the school, leading to the improvements reported above. They are fully aware of the remaining areas of weakness and what the school needs to do to improve

further. Senior leaders have updated their Raising Achievement Plan, which is a helpful document. It accurately shows the considerable journey the school has been on and the distance it still has to travel.

Middle leadership is an increasing strength of the school. The majority of subject leaders are effective. They manage their teams well, rightly insisting that staff focus intently on students' progress. Middle leaders are increasingly good at sharing strategies with each other so that better practice is spread across the school, for example in marking.

Governors have supported the headteacher in his continuous drive for improvement. They have provided professional and effective help with some of the staffing issues. Governors continue to hold the headteacher to account well and are now requiring even more robust and reliable data from the school on which to base their judgements. They are currently reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of the federation with Medina College. They are clarifying the line management responsibilities in the federation so that there is no ambiguity about overarching strategic leadership. They are ably supported in this by representatives of Hampshire Improvement and Advisory Service (HIAS) on behalf of Isle of Wight local authority.

External support

The school receives effective support through the local authority's school improvement service partners from HIAS. Examples of such work include programmes of support for English, mathematics, music and science, and a review of leadership. Clear notes of visits are provided which indicate an appropriate balance of challenge and support from the HIAS team. They also indicate that some of their intended work was frustrated by meetings starting late, sudden changes of priority on the part of a subject leader or the absence of crucial members of staff. The federation is beginning to provide opportunities for staff in both schools to cooperate on projects.