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21 March 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 Sarah Hubbard, Her Majesty's Inspector and Victor Chaffey, Additional inspector to your school on 19 and 20 March 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 third 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 before the next monitoring inspection.

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 Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Russell
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 third monitoring inspection on 19 and 20 March 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, senior and middle leaders, groups of students and members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.

Context

The school is currently working through a series of staff redundancies, carried out to reduce the school's deficit and balance the budget.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school now collects and analyses information about students' achievement at the end of each half term. This provides a helpful picture of students' improving achievement over time. It gives leaders valuable information about which subjects and classes are performing well and which are not. The information is used to identify students who are not on track to meet their targets. These students are then given useful support to help them to catch up. However, leaders have themselves recognised that this additional support is not sufficiently well coordinated across different subjects and that this sometimes leads to duplication and overlap.

Much is being done to ensure that teachers' assessments of students' achievement are as accurate as possible. Senior leaders have, for example, worked very closely with subject departments whose predictions for last year's GCSE results were inaccurate. Much progress has been made, although senior leaders rightly recognise the need to do more to ensure that teachers' assessments are completely accurate.

Students are increasingly achieving more across the range of subjects and are catching up on past underachievement, including in their core literacy and numeracy skills. Gaps between the achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium and other students are closing, particularly in the younger year groups. However, improvements in achievement are variable across year groups, subjects and classes.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve. Students are now more likely to be taught well. There is still, however, a core of inadequate and less-effective teaching. Some lessons are not interesting; students then rapidly become bored and demotivated. In some lessons the teacher's explanations to the class are unclear and muddled; students then quickly become confused and disheartened.

Teachers' questioning skills are improving. Some teachers now ask very effective questions that check students' understanding well and keep everyone interested and challenged. Questioning is still, however, a key area for improvement in many lessons.

Teachers now have detailed information about the students in their classes, including their individual target grades and whether they are on track to meet them. In the best lessons teachers make good use of this information when they plan. This ensures that the work is suitable for different students in the class and that everyone is appropriately challenged by the lesson.

There is now some very effective marking and feedback to students. In some cases teachers provide precise guidance which students respond to and follow closely. However, the quality of marking across the school is variable.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

There continue to be improvements in behaviour. The atmosphere around the school at lunch and break times is pleasant and friendly, despite the fact that the school's vast site is difficult to supervise. Students typically move around sensibly and safely, and arrive at their lessons punctually. A few are a little boisterous and noisy at times, but they respond appropriately when staff challenge them. Students with the most acute needs are well catered for; a range of good provision is in place for these students, some of it developed in partnership with Medina College.

Most students behave well in lessons. The majority are well motivated and have positive attitudes to learning. Some students find it difficult to concentrate. They focus on their work when the teacher is watching them, but drift off task and start to chat when the teacher moves away.

A small number of students disrupt some of their lessons, preventing others from learning. In some cases teachers do not manage these students' behaviour appropriately. They tolerate too much from them and do not follow the school's procedures for dealing with classroom misbehaviour. This inconsistency inevitably makes it more difficult for the staff who do follow the procedures correctly and assiduously challenge any inappropriate behaviour. It also frustrates some well-behaved students, who feel that these students are getting away with too much.

Much good work has been done to reduce student absence. Attendance has improved significantly.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The past few months have been a challenging period for the school. There was a lot of staff illness and absence at the end of last term; this meant that many classes

were taught by supply teachers or temporary staff. Additionally, the school has been working through a series of staff redundancies. The headteacher has managed these challenging issues well and has enabled the school to continue moving forward, although they have affected the pace of improvement.

The school has an effective and cohesive senior team. Senior leaders are realistic about the school's improvement and current effectiveness, and understand its strengths and weaknesses. They are working closely with middle leaders to develop their skills and effectiveness. The school's plan continues to be a useful working document, focusing the most important actions for the school.

Senior leaders visit lessons regularly to check on the quality of teaching and the progress that students are making. They are all able to assess the quality of lessons accurately, analysing their strengths and weaknesses thoroughly. At the moment they give teachers quite a lot of notice of their observations. This provides leaders with a clear picture of what teachers are able to do at their best, but not necessarily of what their lessons are typically like. Observers correctly evaluate what they see the teacher and students do in the lesson, but sometimes miss opportunities to consider wider evidence of students' achievement over time, such as work in books.

Teachers are provided with a range of valuable support and are offered a variety of training opportunities. These have been refined and developed in response to teachers' comments to ensure that they are sufficiently practical and that they meet teachers' needs well. These opportunities are helping staff to improve. There are, however, too few opportunities for teachers to receive training in how to manage students' behaviour effectively.

The governing body is providing effective challenge and support. Governors are highly committed to the school's improvement. They have looked critically at the way in which they check the school's progress for themselves and have made a number of improvements. One governor, for example, meets a group of students each month and asks them a series of questions about behaviour. The responses are analysed carefully and compared to previous results, enabling governors to track changes in students' views over time.

External support

The school's improvement is being very well supported. This support is mainly provided by Hampshire Local Authority and by a company offering educational consultancy. Support is closely matched to the precise needs of different subject areas and is carefully planned and managed to avoid duplication or confusion. In some cases local authority advisors and consultants perform different but complementary roles. In science, for example, a consultant undertook a detailed analysis of the department's performance and will return later to check on progress.

In the meantime, a local authority advisor is providing support to enable the school to deal with the issues raised.

External support for English has not been effective. The school and local authority have recognised this and are working together to ensure that the subject area is appropriately supported and challenged to improve in the future.