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29 November 2013

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 Andrew Lyons, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 27 and 28 November 2013, 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 second 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 not 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 enables 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 second monitoring inspection on 27 and 28 November 2013

Evidence

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

Context

The senior leadership team has been restructured and a new deputy headteacher has recently been appointed. There is further support from a third deputy headteacher working with the school on an interim basis.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Students are starting to achieve more. GCSE examination results improved in 2013. Students made better progress in English and mathematics during their time in the school than those who took examinations in 2012. More students gained five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics. However, examination results were still too low and improvements were not even across different groups of students: girls achieved better than boys and the gap between the achievement of students known to be eligible for free school meals and other students increased slightly.

Students across the school are making better progress in lessons because teaching is improving. However, many students have a lot of catching up to do because they were not well taught when they were younger: they have significant gaps in their basic knowledge and understanding; many also have weak literacy and numeracy skills.

Good systems are now in place to set challenging targets for students and to collect and analyse information about students' achievement. This enabled leaders to analyse the 2013 examination results in considerable depth. This demonstrated that many teachers' predictions of how well Year 11 students were going to do were inaccurate. Some subject department got better results than they predicted; others got worse results. Senior leaders have recognised the need to strengthen the accuracy of teachers' assessments. They are working effectively with middle leaders to resolve this problem.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving. At the time of the last inspection inspectors saw an unusually large amount of inadequate teaching, even for a school judged to require special measures. There is now much less inadequate teaching and more good teaching.

The best lessons are interesting and carefully planned. In these, teachers question students carefully and skilfully; this keeps everyone engaged and interested, and helps students to think more deeply about what they are learning. Students respond very well to teaching like this. Teachers are now provided with useful information about the students in their classes, including appropriately challenging targets for each student. In the best lessons teachers make good use of this information to plan work that challenges everyone in the class, whatever their ability.

There are still, however, too many lessons in which the teaching is dull or not very effective. In some cases lessons lack variety: as one student put it, 'in some lessons we always know what we are going to get'. In others, students spend too long working from books or worksheets and start to lose interest. Many teachers do not make good use of questioning: they ask students only very simple questions, accept (and even praise) weak answers and do not ask questions that challenge and stimulate students' thinking. In some cases teachers are slow to provide help for individual students when they are struggling with a particular task. This leaves students feeling frustrated and unsupported.

Teachers generally mark students' work regularly. In some cases their comments are informative and helpful, although this is not always the case across the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour has improved. Students generally behave very well in lessons, even when the teaching is uninspiring. When they are taught well they are animated and enthusiastic. There were no permanent exclusions last year and the number of fixed-term exclusions fell sharply. Students are also attending more regularly.

Behaviour around the school is generally calm and pleasant, although it can be a little boisterous at times. Students are typically polite, cooperative and friendly. They are appropriately supervised. Staff deal adequately with any poor or unsafe behaviour. There is little graffiti; students say that this is a big improvement.

Clear procedures have been established to help teachers manage behaviour in their classrooms and respond consistently when students misbehave or break school rules. However, some teachers do not follow these procedures. For example, some turn a blind eye to students who are not in correct uniform or wearing their coats in class. Students recognise and resent this inconsistency; it leaves some feeling that they are treated unfairly.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

This is now an improving school. The headteacher has achieved a great deal, particularly given the school's very turbulent history. Students and staff recognise and appreciate the stability and direction that he has brought. He brings energy and enthusiasm to his work and is very visible around the site.

The senior leadership team has been restructured, with a number of changes of personnel. The headteacher has quickly built an effective team of leaders who have a thorough, accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are realistic about the vast amount that still needs to be done, but are setting about the task with considerable enthusiasm.

Crucially, senior leaders have a very good understanding of the effectiveness of each individual teacher and they know what needs to be done to improve their practice. They are rigorously managing teachers' performance. Teachers' professional development is being well supported, both through general training and development opportunities, and by targeted support for individual teachers, particularly where their teaching is less effective.

Good work is also being done to strengthen the leadership role of middle leaders. They meet regularly with senior leaders to discuss and review their work. Good systems and procedures have been introduced to help middle leaders to monitor and check their areas of responsibility and to plan for the future. These bring a structure and formality that are helping to raise the standard of middle leaders' work.

At the time of the last monitoring inspection the school's action plan was not fit for purpose. The headteacher had already recognised this and had begun to make the necessary improvements. This process is now complete and the current plan is a useful working document. The school has also introduced a supplementary short-term plan. While this is a useful document, there is a need to ensure that, as it develops, actions in this plan are carefully coordinated with those in the main action plan.

The governing body is committed to supporting the school's improvement. Governors are increasingly providing challenge to the school's leaders. They are now doing more to check the school's performance for themselves, through visits and discussions with staff, parents and students.

External support

The school is being very well supported. Some of this support comes from Hampshire Local Authority and some from a company offering educational consultancy. This could have led to confusion, duplication and mixed messages. This has not happened because all partners have worked closely together, ensuring that what they provide is valuable, complementary and carefully coordinated.

The impact of this support is evident. Hampshire Local Authority officers, for example, worked with the headteacher to revise and strengthen the action plan and are providing support for the governing body. An independent consultant carried out a large number of joint lesson observations with senior leaders; they are now very skilled at judging the quality of teaching and advising teachers on what they need to do to improve. Opportunities are also increasingly being taken to share good practice with the federated partner school.