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Robert Maddox
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Dear Mr Maddox

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Carisbrooke College

Following my visit to your school on 25 January 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time that you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

The school should take further action to:

- evaluate improvements to teaching, learning and assessment by their impact on pupils' progress
- strengthen school improvement plans by adding measurable milestones which governors can use to evaluate the impact of actions taken by school leaders.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, other senior leaders and members of the governing body to discuss actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. I reviewed some pupils' work with two middle leaders. You accompanied me on a brief visit to a number of lessons around the school. I evaluated a range of

documents, including your self-evaluation and improvement plans.

Context

In July 2016, the headteacher of Carisbrooke College became executive headteacher of the three schools within the Island Innovation Federation: Carisbrooke College, Medina College and the Sixth Form Campus. In September, one of the previous deputy headteachers became head of school and the responsibilities of other senior leaders were changed. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) joined the senior leadership team as an associate leader. Reorganisation of middle leadership has created four heads of faculty areas. A deputy headteacher from Medina College changed role to lead the joint sixth form provision.

Main findings

School leaders have built on the improvements noted during the first monitoring inspection, which took place in November 2015. Reorganisation of the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team in September 2016 provided impetus for further improvement. The executive headteacher now takes a more strategic role and you, as head of school, are responsible for the day-to-day running of the school. You and your colleagues on the senior leadership team have seized the opportunity to drive school improvement systematically and with determination.

You have continued to focus your efforts on developing teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders issued clear expectations for both staff and pupils about what you expect to see happening in lessons, and you are checking to see that these are met across all classes. In September, you launched a new assessment system which provides information about the expected progression of pupils from Years 7 to 11 in every subject. These progression ladders are used by teachers to plan lessons and by pupils to see the next stages in their learning. Regular assessment takes place to check pupils' rates of progress, and thorough analysis of the data helps leaders and teachers identify who needs extra support. A new feedback policy outlines expectations of teachers to provide precise advice to pupils about how to improve their work and how pupils are expected to act on this advice. Your monitoring shows that these new systems and practices have been implemented across the school in a consistent way, which has helped pupils to adjust to the changes confidently. The small sample of pupils' work I reviewed with school leaders showed that most teachers and pupils are meeting the expectations of your feedback policy. Your next steps are to evaluate the impact of these actions on the quality of teaching and levels of achievement by pupils.

When school leaders identify good practice by staff and pupils, this is shared to help others learn. There is a more open culture at the school, with staff keen to improve their skills. Training is increasingly provided by staff with expertise within the Island Innovation Federation. For example, some learning support assistants have been

helping teachers to understand how to support pupils with particular special educational needs more effectively. Training by local authority advisers in English and mathematics has also been well received. Two middle leaders are participating in accredited leadership training courses, which include small research projects to try out new ideas to improve pupils' learning. The local authority has brokered a link with a teaching school on the mainland to provide further professional development for leaders and other staff in the federation.

School leaders are using a wider range of quality assurance activities to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. There is more moderation of work within departments in order to ensure that staff are applying new assessment criteria fairly and consistently. The faculty leaders take responsibility for the quality of assessment information in their subjects and for leading the responses when pupils start to fall behind. Staff are increasingly being held to account for the progress of the pupils they teach and performance management has been strengthened.

A new behaviour policy was also launched in September 2016. This sets out expectations for behaviour in lessons and a clear system of consequences if the expectations are not met. During my visits to classrooms, the atmosphere was purposeful and pupils were appropriately involved in a range of activities. It was clear that the pupils knew what was expected of them during the lessons and they were using assessment guidance to help them progress rapidly. Teachers are now provided with more detailed information about their pupils, including what the latest information shows about their rates of progress. There is also useful advice for teachers about supporting individuals who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The combination of more consistent behaviour management, better teaching and more effective support for pupils vulnerable to underachievement has led to a reduction in incidents of poor behaviour at the school and fewer fixed-term exclusions.

The school's information about the progress of current pupils shows that younger pupils are making faster progress than older ones. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is partly due to the improved transitional arrangements from primary school and the greater stability experienced by pupils in Years 7 and 8. Led by the SENCo, there is closer screening of pupils on entry to the school to help understand their starting points and spot any learning needs. This sharper identification has led to earlier provision of support to help pupils catch up quickly. Literacy and numeracy interventions alongside a structured reading scheme are also promoting faster progress. There is closely targeted support for the relatively high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A school priority is to improve the performance of disadvantaged pupils. The school's published report about the use of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils is detailed and comprehensive. Leaders are evaluating which strategies are most successful, and aim to build on those to help accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

Improvements made throughout the school during the first year following the inspection had a positive impact on the 2016 outcomes for Year 11 pupils. When the analysis of validated examination results is published, you expect progress measures to show that, overall, the progress of pupils at the school is similar to national levels. The proportions of Year 11 pupils who achieved at least a GCSE grade C in English and in mathematics were higher than national levels in both subjects. However, progress made by disadvantaged pupils shows wide gaps in their achievement compared with other pupils nationally with the same starting points, and there is still much to do, particularly with pupils in key stage 4.

Pupils from Carisbrooke and Medina Colleges are taught together in the separate Sixth Form Campus. This provision has improved since the leadership reorganisation in September. The new head of sixth form has tightened the day-to-day operation and introduced better systems for gathering information about students' attendance and progress. Students now have mentors to help support them with their studies and personal development. The school's tracking information shows that, currently, students are making progress in line with similar students nationally in many, but not all, subjects. There is limited monitoring of teaching and learning by subject leaders with responsibility for sixth form performance. Although improvements are underway, there is scope for strengthened monitoring and more rigorous evaluation of this 16 to 19 provision.

A single governing body is responsible for all three provisions in the federation. Since the previous inspection, the governing body has been strengthened by the addition of new members with helpful skills, expertise and experience. Since the leadership reorganisation in September, the governing body has worked more productively with school leadership teams. There is evidence of greater challenge by governors and they have the capacity to hold leaders to account effectively, as well as providing appropriate support. However, governors' ability to fully evaluate the impact of leaders' actions is hampered by the lack of milestone information about pupils' progress towards meeting success criteria.

The governors' decision to promote the headteacher of Carisbrooke College to the post of executive headteacher has been instrumental in enabling improvements in all three provisions in the federation. His determined, personable and effective leadership has promoted much greater openness and collaboration between staff at Carisbrooke and Medina Colleges, and he has sensibly welcomed support by Hampshire local authority advisers. Much has been achieved in the first four months of this new leadership arrangement.

In summary, leaders have carried out a range of appropriate actions to address most of the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection in March 2015. Since then, the school's own self-evaluation has rightly identified some emerging strengths and other areas of concern. School improvement plans have become overloaded with tasks. Leaders, including governors, now need to re-

evaluate the school's current position and focus sharply on the actions necessary to sustain improvements and address remaining weaknesses.

External support

School leaders and teachers are benefiting from effective support by advisers from Hampshire local authority. The link adviser offers appropriate challenge and support, and subject advisers are helping to improve leadership, teaching and learning, particularly in English and mathematics. The mathematics department is also participating in a project to improve teaching and learning for subject leaders and teachers across the Isle of Wight. The local authority has recently brokered additional support from a teaching school on the mainland.

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

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector