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22 October 2013

Ms Denise Shepherd
Executive Principal
Chatham Grammar School for Boys
Maidstone Road
Holcombe
Chatham
ME4 6JB

Dear Ms Shepherd

Special measures monitoring inspection of Chatham Grammar School for Boys

Following my visit to your school on 22 October 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, the interim principal, members of the senior team and leaders from the Rochester Grammar School Thinking Schools' Trust, who are helping the academy to improve. I also met with the Chair and another member of the Interim Management Board, to which trustees have delegated responsibility to ensure that the academy secures rapid improvement. I spoke on the telephone with the Director of Children's Services for Medway and I evaluated the trustees' statement of action and the academy's improvement plans. The interim principal and assistant headteacher accompanied me on a tour of the academy enabling me to go into lessons, talk to students and look at their work.

Context

Since the recent section 5 inspection, significant changes have been made to the governance and leadership of the academy. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have resigned. An Executive Principal, a National Leader in Education (NLE) who is the substantive Executive Principal of the Rochester Grammar School Thinking Schools' Trust and teaching school alliance, and an interim principal, also from Rochester Grammar School, now have responsibility for leading and managing the academy.

Trustees have disbanded the original governing body and appointed an Interim Management Board with delegated powers to lead the academy until it is removed from special measures. Trustees have also committed to securing a sustainable solution to the leadership of the academy through a formal sponsorship agreement with Rochester Grammar School.

In addition to the departure of some of the previous senior leaders, several other teachers have also left the academy. Most post-holders have been permanently replaced, with the exception of four vacancies which are currently filled on a temporary basis.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since taking up the position of Executive Principal, you have wasted no time in taking the necessary steps to secure rapid improvements.

Rigorous strategies to improve the quality of teaching have included:

- routine observations of all teachers with clear targets identified and necessary training provided
- the implementation of formal competency proceedings where necessary
- the introduction of a non-negotiable teaching plan for every lesson, with a requirement that teachers plan a range of tasks to match the varying learning needs of individuals within a group
- the implementation of seating plans designed to ensure that students are appropriately challenged in all lessons and that aspirational targets are met
- an expectation of all teachers that they engage with the staff training programme and commit to improving their teaching
- the implementation of a new marking policy requiring teachers to specify what skills or knowledge students have developed well and what they need to work on to improve.

Some of these strategies were evident in the lessons that I visited. You were also able to provide me with positive feedback from students who have noticed that lessons are now more purposeful and that their work is being regularly marked with helpful advice on what to work on next in order to improve.

Equally robust steps have been taken to bring about the necessary rapid improvements in English. The previous head of department has resigned from the leadership position. The department is now being led temporarily by an advanced skills teacher for English, until such time as the post is substantively filled. During this period, support and coaching are being provided by a strong head of department of a school within the teaching school alliance. A review of the teaching of English has already taken place and training is now scheduled to address the individual needs of each member of the English team.

Senior team roles have been temporarily revised to ensure that there is an urgent focus on the issues identified at the previous inspection. A need to restructure the leadership of the school in order to bring a growing budget deficit under control has already been correctly identified. Proposals to address this will be put together as soon as the trustees have finalised decisions about the sponsorship of the school. In the meantime, you have correctly identified the need to change the timings of the school day so that the organisation of the curriculum underpins improvements in students' learning.

Urgent improvements to the fabric of the building have been correctly identified and commissioned, in particular to the quality of the sixth form base. The English department is scheduled to be relocated to the centre of the school, reflecting its key role in enabling students to achieve excellence across all subjects. The curriculum is under review, particularly in the sixth form where retention rates are poor owing to inappropriately matched provision. You have correctly begun to address this by raising the entry requirements to the sixth form, with immediate effect.

Acting on judicious intervention from the Director of Children's Services for Medway, trustees have put together a statement of action, designed to move the academy out of special measures. The Director's actions have also successfully ensured that trustees have been able to source leadership for the academy with a proven track record of success and the potential for long-term sustainability. Members of the newly formed Interim Management Board are well versed in their roles and have high expectations of the new leadership of the academy. They understand their accountabilities well and expect to see rapid improvements.

Since your appointment, you have wisely amended the statement of action and incorporated it into the academy action plan. The plan now underpins all leadership

activity. It covers each of the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection and specifies well-targeted actions to bring these about.

Following the monitoring inspection these judgements were made:

The trustees' statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Management Board, the Education Funding Agency, the Director of Children's Services for Medway and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Farmer
Her Majesty's Inspector