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Ms Julie Finch
Kickstart
Telford College of Arts and Technology
Haybridge Road
Telford
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Dear Ms Finch

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kickstart

Following my visit to your school on 11 February 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 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 on 27–28 November 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the senior leaders and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action, which is also the school's improvement action plan, was evaluated.

Context

Since the previous inspection the teacher in charge has resigned. A new head of school has been appointed and taken up her post as from the 1 January 2014, along with a new deputy head of school. Both are employed by Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT), which took on the responsibility for leading and managing Kickstart from 1 January 2014. The head of school continues to work in the college for 50% of her time; the deputy head of school works full time in Kickstart. At the time of this visit, two agency teachers were being deployed to teach lessons and one Kickstart teacher was on extended leave. The local authority has funded an

additional information technology teacher who is one of the agency staff and took up post from 1 January 2014. A new art teacher took up post from 1 January 2014.

At the time of the previous inspection, it was reported that there had been a large number of students from mainstream Telford and Wrekin schools who had been on Kickstart's roll as part of an arrangement called 'New Directions'. The local authority report that this arrangement no longer exists. A small number of Key Stage 3 students, on Kickstart's roll, access provision at the Scott Centre.

TCAT and the local authority have started initial discussions with the Department for Education about a proposal for the Kickstart to be converted into a sponsored academy with TCAT being the sponsor.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

There have been significant changes to staffing and the long-term plans for Kickstart which reflect a new determination to improve the provision that students experience. Students have recognised improvements and especially the good work of the deputy head of school.

The new head of school and deputy head of school have made a good start to refocusing efforts on improving the achievement of students. Checks on students' progress and individual learning plans, for example, have been introduced to add rigour to the quality of teaching and monitoring of achievement. All teaching staff now have roles as personal tutors and regularly meet with students to discuss their progress. Unfortunately, there is some staff resistance to these changes which manifests itself in a reluctance to fully take on board the accountability for students' attendance and achievement.

Since 1 January 2014, there has been a focus on creating staff stability to improve teaching. The new teaching staff have added capacity, which has helped. However, neither the head of school nor the deputy head of school have monitored the quality of teaching and so do not have a measured evaluation of these changes.

Attendance still remains a grave concern. While the attendance of some students is good and continues to improve, this is not the case for all. The overall rate of attendance for Year 11 students is only 52% and highlights the significant challenge that needs to be tackled. The deputy head of school is analysing attendance figures so that a more strategic approach can be taken to addressing issues.

There has been a lack of dialogue between the management committee and the head of school. As a result, the management committee has not tailored its support and challenge for Kickstart sufficiently. While both have a sense of the issues that

need to be resolved, there has been no joint thinking on how best to tackle them. Improvement work has been driven by the local authority's statement of action but, now that new leadership is in place, this is somewhat outdated. In the past, performance management of staff has been poor and the head of school has appropriate plans to rigorously monitor teachers' performance. There are no clear targets in place for the performance of the new head of school and deputy head of school and therefore the impact of their work.

The local authority's statement of action, which is also the improvement plan, covers all of the key areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection and is fit for purpose. Actions are clearly explained but there are insufficient measurable targets. The head of school has not been involved in drawing up the improvement plan and is now at a stage where she needs to review and amend the plan. Local authority support for the school has brought about the appointment of the head of school and deputy head of school, which is having a very positive impact.

The previous inspection recommended an external review of governance and the school's use of pupil premium funding. The local authority had put plans in place for this review to be undertaken by an officer of Telford and Wrekin local authority. This would not provide an 'external' review so, as a matter of urgency, this now needs to be addressed.

At the time of the previous inspection there were some administration errors concerning the single central register which is a safeguarding check on staff. A scrutiny of the single central register showed that at the time of this monitoring inspection it was complete.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action, which is also the school's action plan, is fit for purpose but requires reviewing.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Telford and Wrekin. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook
Senior Her Majesty's Inspector