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Ms Julie Finch
Headteacher
KICKSTART
Telford College of Arts and Technology
Haybridge Road
Telford
TF1 2NP

Dear Ms Finch

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kickstart

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 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 November 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 Management Committee and the Director of Children's Services for Telford and Wrekin.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - fully implementing a system that identifies gaps in students' skills, knowledge and understanding in all academic subjects taught
 - using the information gained to develop tailored learning plans for each individual to build on their strengths and fill in gaps in learning alongside, or as part of, their academic courses
 - making clear to students what they should do to improve their work and achievement, through helpful verbal and written feedback
 - regularly monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and taking effective action to bring about improvement where weaknesses are identified.

- Improve students' achievement and increase their rate of progress by:
 - improving their attendance
 - establishing higher expectations of what students can achieve
 - providing courses and subjects that interest students and challenge them at a demanding level
 - considering each student's needs and ensuring that they have an effective balance of academic and vocational subjects to study, at the right level for their varying abilities
 - ensuring that students have enough taught time to complete academic courses.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring safeguarding arrangements fully meet statutory requirements
 - re-establishing systems to check on and support the quality of teaching, teachers' work, and students' outcomes
 - ensuring that money received through the pupil premium is used to support those individuals eligible, and check regularly that it has an impact on their achievement
 - ensuring that the incoming teacher-in-charge has the appropriate resources, training and personnel to lead, manage and improve Kickstart effectively
 - increasing the monitoring role of the management committee, and regularly using the expertise of its members to support school improvement
 - working to provide suitable alternative provision and vocational opportunities that suit students' varying aptitudes and abilities.

- Gain clarity from the local authority about the inclusion of New Directions students on Kickstart's roll, in order to ensure that Kickstart's responsibilities are fully explained and met.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 17 December 2014

Evidence

During this inspection, I jointly observed learning and teaching with the deputy headteacher in a range of subjects in Years 10 and 11. Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the Chair and members of the management committee, the education welfare officer (EWO) and a representative from the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with the headteacher of Burton Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) who are providing support to the school. Informal discussions were held with students in Years 10 and 11 and with staff. There were too few responses on Parent View for these to be considered. I scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's monitoring records of the quality of teaching undertaken by school leaders together with the headteacher's report to, and the minutes of meetings of, the management committee. Additional documentation was scrutinised, including information about students' attendance and the vetting checks on staff new to the school.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in July 2014, three teachers have left the school and two replacements for these staff have been appointed. An inclusion mentor has been appointed to focus on modifying students' behaviour. The school has moved to new accommodation housed within Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT). Kickstart no longer offers provision for Key Stage 3 students. This group are accommodated at the Linden and Scott Centre. The management committee, the school's governing body, has been reconstituted and now focuses solely on the work of Kickstart. The school has recently submitted an application to the Department for Education to become a sponsored academy with TCAT being the sponsor.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the last monitoring inspection, school staff have worked effectively to close the gaps in students' achievement brought about by a legacy of poor teaching over time. Information provided by the school shows that the majority of students leaving at the end of Year 11 in July 2014 made the progress expected of them in English and mathematics GCSE and functional skills examinations.

The work in students' books shows that the majority of students are producing work that is appropriate to their level of knowledge and understanding. Subject teachers are tracking students' progress. This information shows that most students in Years 10 and 11 are making the progress expected, especially in mathematics. School leaders have recently introduced a system that enables them to track students' progress on alternative provision courses. However, they have not evaluated this

information. As a consequence, school leaders do not have an overall picture of students' progress.

Students are following a unit award scheme accredited by an examination board. Since the last monitoring inspection, the majority of students have completed at least one unit equivalent to entry level and level 1 qualifications in activities such as self-awareness, emotional and mental well-being and basic indoor climbing skills.

The quality of teaching

Since the last monitoring inspection, school leaders have frequently monitored and accurately evaluated the quality of teaching. This has been achieved by observing lessons, checking students' books, speaking to students about their work and analysing the information on students' progress provided by individual teachers.

When teaching is effective, teachers' good subject knowledge and accurate assessment of students' abilities are used to plan learning opportunities that are matched to their needs and engage their interest. In mathematics, students are given opportunities to use and practise their arithmetical skills. As a consequence, students are able to solve 'real-life' problems such as planning journeys or calculating the probability of events occurring. In English, students' reading and writing skills are improved through the study of a range of literature and opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences. However, students' literacy skills are not consistently developed across other subjects.

Staff have received training on how to provide effective feedback to help students improve their work. As a result, most teachers provide verbal and written feedback that praises students for their effort and quality of work. Teachers' comments enable students to correct mistakes and better understand their work. Students said that the work in lessons is appropriate and that teachers are 'better at helping us with our work'. However, where teaching is less effective students do not respond to the marking in order to improve their work.

Teaching assistants are carefully directed by class teachers and are adept at refocusing students who lose concentration or whose behaviour deteriorates. As a consequence, teaching assistants are able to concentrate on supporting and improving students' learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Staff and students agreed that students' behaviour in and out of the classroom has improved. They added that expectations of students' behaviour and work are higher. During this inspection, a small minority of students exhibited challenging behaviour. However, this was tackled quickly and effectively. Information provided by the school shows that the appointment of the inclusion mentor has reduced the number

of occasions learning is disrupted. Since the last inspection, there have been no incidents of students requiring physical restraint. This is a reduction to previous figures. The work in students' books shows that the majority of students take their work seriously and have positive attitudes to learning.

Students' attendance is improving. The proportion of students with an attendance above 60% is increasing. Students' attendance at alternative provision is closely monitored. Information provided by the school shows that attendance at alternative provision is improving. However, school leaders and the management committee acknowledge that there is still much to do to ensure students' attendance is consistently close to national averages. The school's attendance officer and local authority education welfare officer do not have the capacity to address the deep-seated attendance issues of a large number of students. As a consequence, teaching assistants and other staff are redirected to deal with this aspect of the school's work.

Students said they feel safe in the school and that they appreciate the support and guidance they receive from teachers, teaching assistants and the learning mentor. One student new to the school said that the staff and students were kind, helpful and considerate and had helped her settle quickly into the school's routines.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

School leaders and the local authority have worked together to resolve the staffing issues evident at the previous monitoring inspection. As a consequence, the quality of teaching and students' learning has improved. Staff said that there is a clear and shared view of what the school needs to do to improve.

Leaders frequently monitor and evaluate the work of teachers. Judgements on the quality of teaching and students' learning are in line with that seen during this inspection. School leaders acknowledge that improvements need to be made in how students respond to teachers' marking and how teachers help students improve their literacy skills. Individual subject teachers are monitoring and evaluating students' progress. However, this information is not centrally collated or moderated by school leaders. As a result, they are unable to confirm the accuracy of teachers' judgements.

The school's improvement plan has been updated to include emerging issues and is fit for purpose. However, proposed actions are being monitored by the same person responsible for leading the action. As a consequence, there is not an impartial evaluation of the effectiveness of the action.

Targets have been set for the headteacher and the impact of her performance has been monitored. However, staff new to the school have not been set targets by which their performance can be evaluated.

As a result of the external review of governance, the management committee has been reconstituted and focuses solely on the work of Kickstart. As a consequence, members of the management committee have a more accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Training on how to effectively use the pupil premium funds has been provided by the local authority for school leaders and the management committee. The school now has a clear picture of how pupil premium funds are spent. However, the impact of this spending has not been evaluated.

Safeguarding requirements are met.

External support

The local authority has provided human resource, financial and school improvement support to the school. As a consequence, the school has tackled the staffing issues seen at the last inspection and the quality of teaching has improved. School leaders and members of the management committee have had training on how to use the pupil premium funds. However, it is still not clear how much pupil premium grant the school should receive. The quality of information from students' previous schools about their personal, social and academic development is variable. In some instances, the information is detailed and helps Kickstart to plan appropriate support and intervention. However, on occasions vital and necessary information is missing. As a result, essential support for students is sometimes delayed.

The school has recently started working with leaders and teachers from Burton PRU. As a consequence, the school's monitoring of students' attendance and progress at alternative provision has improved.