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Mr M Farmer
Queen Elizabeth Humanities College
Ashfields
Bromyard
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HR7 4QS

Dear Mr Farmer

Special measures monitoring inspection of Queen Elizabeth Humanities College

Following my visit with Andrea Quigley, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 25-26 April 2017, 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 that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Herefordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2015.

- Urgently increase the impact of leadership and management at all levels to secure rapid and sustained improvements in pupil outcomes by:
 - ensuring governors receive training, so that they have the necessary skills to challenge leaders and hold them to account for the performance of the school
 - setting clear targets in improvement planning, so that the success of leaders' actions can be measured in terms of their impact on outcomes for pupils
 - continuing to review and refine the deployment and monitoring of pupil premium funding, so that it is used effectively to close the gaps between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and others
 - monitoring rigorously the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, including that of different groups of pupils in all year groups, so that underachievement is identified and arrested swiftly
 - strengthening the skills and abilities of middle leaders in monitoring pupils' progress in their areas and in checking the work of their teams
 - ensuring that information on pupils' attainment and progress is accurate in all subjects
 - making sure that all staff have read and are fully conversant with statutory guidance to keep children safe
 - drawing on leadership support from good and outstanding schools in order to build leadership capacity.
- Improve teaching so that the progress of all pupils, and all groups of pupils, continues to accelerate by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - planning lessons and setting activities that take into account the prior knowledge, understanding and skills of pupils and enthuse them to do well
 - ensuring that all teachers have the confidence and skills to respond to how well pupils are learning and adapt their lessons accordingly
 - ensuring that pupils act on teachers' feedback to improve their learning and work
 - sharing best practice in the school so that all teaching matches that of the best.

- Urgently improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - raising the achievement of all pupils and groups of pupils, including that of disadvantaged pupils and the most able
 - ensuring that pupils achieve well in all subjects, and by reducing gaps in pupils' attainment and progress between subjects.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 25 April 2017 to 26 April 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 10 lessons in a range of subjects across key stages 3 and 4. Some of these observations were carried out with a member of the school's senior leadership team. During these observations, inspectors spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work. An inspector met formally with a group of Year 9 pupils and discussed their experiences of being pupils at Queen Elizabeth Humanities College.

During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, and members of the governing body. Both national leaders of education (NLEs) who support with the school were consulted.

Inspectors evaluated a range of documents, including information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance, the quality of teaching and the school's action plans. There were insufficient recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered.

Context

Staffing at the school continues to be stable. Since the last monitoring inspection in February 2017, leaders have successfully recruited two new teachers for the next academic year. The secondment made to the senior leadership team remains in place. The governing body continues to receive regular updates of the school's progress regarding actions taken towards the removal of special measures from the evidence review committee (ERC). Senior leaders are working with colleagues in other schools nearby on ways that existing strong relationships could become more formalised in the future to benefit pupils throughout all phases of their education.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have successfully reviewed the school's option process and curriculum. The new system provides pupils with the opportunity to study relevant and valuable qualifications that meet their interests, aptitudes and aspirations. Next year, an increasing proportion of pupils will study qualifications that could lead to the award of the English Baccalaureate. Other pupils will study high-quality vocational qualifications to develop valuable skills through applied learning. Leaders further personalise the curriculum for individual pupils when required. For example, a small number of pupils study away from the school site for part of the week. Leaders have clear and robust procedures in place to check their attendance and welfare needs are met. Information about how well these pupils are doing is recorded less

frequently than for the courses they study at school. Consequently, leaders are not able to intervene as promptly to ensure progress as they might.

Middle leaders are secure in their skills and abilities to monitor pupils' progress and check on the work of their teams. They carry out regular lesson observations and work reviews, providing effective and accurate feedback to teachers in order to support and challenge them. Middle leaders attend extended senior leadership team meetings which widen their leadership experience and understanding of whole-school issues. These meetings also provide opportunities for them to contribute to the school's strategic development.

Leaders' monitoring of interventions to support disadvantaged pupils continues to develop well. Leaders can now thoroughly evaluate how the additional funding they receive to support these pupils is used. Leaders effectively describe how their work supports disadvantaged pupils' learning and pastoral needs. They analyse the impact of interventions for different groups of disadvantaged pupils, for example high-prior-attaining pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders regularly monitor teaching and judge accurately its effectiveness. The quality of teaching continues to improve. The strengths that leaders regularly identify in lessons include high-quality discussions and verbal feedback to pupils and positive relationships in the classroom. Leaders also identify planning that takes into account pupils' prior learning and different starting points. Teaching is supported by high-quality training and development. Sessions that are prepared and led by colleagues where they share examples of best practice at the school are highly regarded. Training is highly effective because leaders are able to observe the positive impact of this training on subsequent visits to lessons. Leaders are strongly committed to developing staff to achieve their potential. For example, there are clear plans in place to support teaching staff who will be joining the school next year. These plans aim to make sure new teachers are fully conversant with leaders' systems and expectations when they start.

Governors sustain their ambition towards the removal of special measures. Many governors were available during this inspection, demonstrating their commitment and involvement in supporting the school's work to tackle the identified areas for improvement. Highly involved in the strategic development of the school, governors keep up to date with progress towards achieving the clear targets contained within improvement plans by regular reports from leaders and the ERC. Governors develop detailed knowledge and expertise within the specific areas of the school's work they oversee and ensure that other governors receive summaries. As a result, governors are well versed in developments at the school, for example recent changes to the options process and curriculum. They question leaders well to make sure actions taken are appropriate and will contribute to further improvement.

Safeguarding continues to be effective. Robust and methodical systems are in place

to make certain that adults in the school are suitable to work with pupils. Governors have regular oversight of this work and so can ensure that processes are followed appropriately and reflect the most up-to-date legislation and guidance. Staff are well trained regarding safeguarding and so can talk with confidence about how they would identify possible concerns and what action to take in such situations. Leaders know that training is effective through checking how well staff know their responsibilities. A wide range of external agencies are effectively deployed when required to support pupils. Governors are appropriately trained and fully conversant with their safeguarding responsibilities. However, although safeguarding leaders maintain detailed records of school staff, safeguarding training records are less comprehensive regarding the specific training governors have received.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Staff respond confidently to the needs of pupils in lessons, based on assessments they make of progress during the lesson. As a result, lessons engage and motivate pupils who generally focus well and work hard. Teachers plan effectively learning activities that provide varying levels of challenge and support for pupils. They know their pupils well and so make sure pupils complete tasks that are appropriate to their starting points. Pupils are encouraged to move on to more challenging work when ready. Teachers often make reference to increasing levels of challenge of tasks which spurs pupils on. They also make sure pupils are aware of how their work will be assessed, which supports improvement. For example, in technology lessons, pupils provide clear advice to each other based on assessment criteria. They use this to explain how practical work can be improved to raise the quality of the final product.

Pupils demonstrate increasing levels of resilience and confidence when working and use the skills they have to extend their learning. There are many opportunities for pupils to collaborate and support their peers through discussion, providing feedback on work and asking or answering questions. For example, during the inspection, a pupil queried the method the teacher was using in a calculation during a mathematics lesson. Other pupils were able to provide thoughtful and detailed reasons as to the best way to approach the question which developed the understanding of the class.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils judge behaviour to be good around the school and feel that the rare instances of bullying that occur are dealt with effectively. Leaders' records demonstrate there is very little use of inappropriate or offensive language. The proportion of pupils excluded from the school remains low and this sanction is only used as a last resort. No pupils have been permanently excluded this year.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are able to talk confidently about the many ways they know to keep themselves safe and well. However, they are less

clear about how their curriculum develops other aspects of personal, social and health education. Similarly, although the school's culture and ethos embodies British values, teachers do not promote these effectively enough for pupils to identify confidently where these are promoted through their curriculum.

Currently, overall attendance is just below the national average. Many pupils have high levels of attendance, but a very small number of pupils, who are disadvantaged, are persistently absent. Leaders regularly check the attendance of different groups of pupils and know which strategies prove effective in reducing absence. Leaders are currently recruiting an additional member of staff to increase the school's capacity to support pupils' attendance in the future.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders continue to collect regularly information about pupils' progress. Patterns in assessment information demonstrate the positive impact of improvements in the quality of teaching and additional interventions to improve pupils' outcomes. Recent analysis of this information shows that disadvantaged pupils are sustaining similar rates of progress as their peers in all year groups. Differences in progress between boys and girls continue to diminish. For most year groups, remaining gender differences are consistent with previous national patterns. This is because of improvements in boys' progress. However, leaders have identified that girls in Year 10 make faster progress than boys in option subjects. Other than this difference, pupils' progress is generally consistent across subjects. Leaders' analysis suggests at this time older pupils with high prior attainment are making more progress than similar pupils have in the past. In addition, high-prior-attaining younger pupils continue to make more progress when compared to older pupils with similar starting points.

Subjects identified through leaders' thorough analysis as requiring additional support benefit from participation in the raising achievement process (RAP). Additional actions taken to support these subjects are reviewed regularly by leaders and governors. RAP continues to be effective because all subjects involved in the process are able to demonstrate improvements in pupils' attainment this year.

External support

Leaders and governors continue to work with two NLEs who provide effective external support. The NLEs make certain that the ERC sustains the robust support and challenge that ensures leaders' actions are effective. Additionally, the NLEs successfully maintain and forge new links with leaders and teachers at other schools to support the rapid progress being made at Queen Elizabeth Humanities College.