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13 July 2018

Mr M Golden  
Kirkby College  
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Nottingham  
Nottinghamshire  
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Dear Mr Golden

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Kirkby College**

Following my visit with Russell Barr, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 4 to 5 July 2018, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2018.

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.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to 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 Nottinghamshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Stevens

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2018.**

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - urgently establishing robust and transparent systems for making and following up referrals around safeguarding
  - ensuring roles and responsibilities for safeguarding arrangements are clear and understood by all
  - establishing a clear vision for school improvement and ensuring this is understood by all staff
  - ensuring leadership roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood by all
  - evaluating all aspects of the school’s work thoroughly, and amending plans accordingly
  - ensuring that all improvement plans identify clear and precise actions, measurable success criteria, specific timescales and those responsible for monitoring and evaluating actions
  - developing a strategic approach for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to ensure they are fully supported in all aspects of school life and make good progress
  - challenging staff underperformance swiftly and supporting them to improve
  - ensuring that teachers consistently apply the school’s assessment and feedback policy
  - establishing clear strategies for the allocation of additional funding and evaluating its impact
  - ensuring that those responsible for governance have the skills, knowledge and understanding to hold leaders to account.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
  - plan activities which meet pupils’ different needs and abilities
  - routinely plan activities which interest and motivate pupils
  - are held to account for pupils’ outcomes.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - providing adequate facilities and a suitable atmosphere for pupils to eat their lunch in comfort
  - ensuring toilet facilities provide adequate hygiene and privacy

- ensuring teachers apply the behaviour policy consistently
  - reducing low-level disruption in lessons
  - improving pupils' behaviour at unstructured times
  - further developing strategies already in place to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- Improve the provision in the sixth form by:
- supporting the leader of the sixth form to take a strategic role to improve the quality of the education provided
  - increasing opportunities for students to participate in work-related learning and to undertake work experience
  - improving students' attendance.

External reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 4 July 2018 to 5 July 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the leader of the sixth form, middle leaders and members of the trust and the local governing body. They held discussions with two groups of pupils and spoke with pupils during lessons and social time. They also met with a group of teachers. Inspectors observed teaching in a wide range of key stage 3 subjects, making short visits to 14 lessons. It was not possible to observe learning in key stage 4, as there were no Year 11 pupils in school and all Year 10 pupils were participating in work experience. Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation, including information on the school's website. They scrutinised records of pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance as well as records relating to pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. They also scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures and records. The lead inspector spoke by telephone to the local authority's safeguarding officer and school's support service manager. The lead inspector also spoke with an external consultant supporting school governance.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in the senior leadership at the school. The previous executive headteacher has left the school. The head of school has been absent from her post for some time. The school's deputy headteacher has taken on the position of acting headteacher since March 2018. On his appointment to this role, he wasted no time in ensuring that the leadership team was restructured. Senior roles and responsibilities are now clearly defined. The post of chief executive officer has been removed from the school's senior leadership structure. The senior leadership team is considerably smaller than was previously the case and comprises the acting headteacher, two assistant headteachers, the coordinator of SEN and/or disabilities and the school's business manager.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant turbulence in staffing within the senior leadership team. Despite this, the current leadership team, led by the acting headteacher, has worked swiftly to bring about the necessary improvements in the school. The acting headteacher has wasted no time in drawing up and implementing an effective action plan for improvement. Leaders have rightly prioritised the safeguarding of pupils, improving the school environment, pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching. The acting headteacher has a clear vision for improvement, accompanied by high expectations of all staff, and this has been successfully communicated to all. Staff have praised the acting headteacher and

current senior team for fostering a new and shared culture of trust, belief and cooperation. The senior team has a visible presence in school and staff feel better supported.

The acting headteacher, while working with a substantially reduced leadership team, has been able to enhance its capacity through restructuring the team and ensuring clarity in roles and responsibilities. It is now a unified team. Senior leaders support the acting headteacher in driving whole-school improvements and in holding middle leaders to account for the effectiveness of the curriculum. All staff are clear about leaders' expectations and say that senior leaders support them well. A new policy for behaviour management is being applied more consistently and pupils' behaviour has improved dramatically as a result.

Leaders are realistic that they are on a journey of school improvement and that not everything can be improved immediately. They are clear about which actions are working well and which areas require further support and development. The whole-school action plan contains a comprehensive range of actions that addresses all of the improvement areas identified in the previous inspection report. Timescales and lines of accountability are clear. Staff have been actively involved in decisions so that there is a shared sense of ownership in understanding whole-school policies and improvement strategies. This is evident in subject improvement plans, which are now closely aligned to the whole-school vision. Improvement actions are clear in the planning documentation. However, more specific measurable success criteria are needed to help leaders and governors to fully evaluate the success, or otherwise, of leaders' actions in bringing about rapid improvement in pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance.

Leaders took immediate action to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils following the last inspection. Together with strong and frequent support from Nottinghamshire's safeguarding children in education officer, the systems in place to record and follow up referrals around safeguarding are now fit for purpose. The designated safeguarding lead is well supported by a team of trained staff, and a governor has oversight of this area. The roles and responsibilities for safeguarding arrangements are now clearly defined and understood by all. Staff are further supported by weekly safeguarding briefings. Leaders are working effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the right support. Pupils know who they can talk to if they find themselves in difficulty and they told inspectors that they feel safe in school.

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum at key stages 4 and 5. The school now offers viable courses that best support the current and future interests and aspirations of pupils. Consequently, leaders have wisely taken the decision to focus on a slightly narrower range of qualifications that can be delivered well. This includes the removal of early entry for a number of GCSE option subjects at key stage 4. Class groupings have also been reconsidered. In mathematics, for example, the reorganisation of the groups in key stage 4 is enabling teachers to tailor the

provision more closely to the full range of pupils' abilities.

Senior leaders are working closely with subject leaders to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum. Leaders have put into place more stringent line-management processes to hold middle leaders and teaching staff to account for pupils' outcomes. All staff now have performance review targets that include progress outcomes for key stage 4, for example. All pupils know their target grades, and these are displayed on the cover of pupils' workbooks.

The oversight of the funding and provision for pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is strengthening. Leaders now have a clearer understanding of the barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils and of how new support strategies will be implemented, monitored and reviewed over time. While the systems are now set up in readiness for the new school year, it is too early to see the impact of this work on pupils' attendance, attainment and progress. A review of the use of the pupil premium has been commissioned to report on the effectiveness of leaders' actions in the coming months, but has not yet started. Leaders were not able to provide an evaluation of the impact of the use of the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding.

While the senior leaders are a united team, some aspects of leadership are still in the development stage. For example, the provision for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities has not yet been reviewed so that leaders can track the specific interventions and progress made by these pupils. This includes the follow up of training in how to teach pupils with SEN and/or disabilities by teaching staff and additional adults in the classroom.

Governance is beginning to strengthen. Governors have worked hard to restore relationships within school since the last inspection. Trustees and local governors are well intentioned, committed and determined to see rapid improvements in the school. They have engaged positively with an external review of governance, and now have a better understanding of their strategic role and the importance of holding senior leaders to account. However, trustees and governors do not yet have a sharp enough understanding of the impact of the school's work to improve standards. This includes the impact of improvement work on pupils' outcomes and the impact of additional government funding, such as the pupil premium.

Despite the turbulence that the school has been through, leaders are building a sense of hope and optimism for the future. Staff who spoke with inspectors reported that current leaders are building a more positive culture. Staff say that they feel involved in helping to shape the school's future, and have a greater sense of ownership, allowing initiatives to have time to become established before new ones are introduced.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Leaders have begun to take action to address the weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment identified at the last inspection. Personalised coaching and mentoring is provided for those teachers who need it. Professional learning has focused on enabling teachers to plan learning activities that meet the needs and abilities of all pupils. Inspectors, however, observed variations in how well all teachers have used the professional learning in their practice.

A development group of staff, led by subject leaders, has worked on ensuring that staff understand the school's expectations for teachers' planning – referred to as the 'non-negotiables'. However, the extent to which all staff have applied these expectations remains too variable between and within curriculum subjects.

Inspectors found that in some subjects, a consistent combination of high expectations, coupled with appropriately challenging work and the full application of the school's policy on using feedback is enabling pupils to demonstrate faster progress. For example, in Year 9 English and modern languages, high expectations, high challenge and teachers' expectation for pupils to commit to improving their work are having a positive impact on learning and on the presentation of their work. In a GCSE Spanish lesson, for example, the learning objectives were defined according to pupils' targets and, consequently, they knew exactly what they had to do.

However, in other subjects there is much greater variability in how well pupils make progress and in the standards of presentation. In these subjects, teachers' expectations are low and the learning is not sufficiently challenging. Consequently, pupils drift off task and low-level disruption occurs.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Leaders have introduced a new policy for managing behaviour, which incorporates the views of staff and pupils. The consultative approach taken by leaders has been warmly welcomed. The new policy recognises positive behaviour and achievement, and challenges poor behaviour. Senior leaders have ensured that they have a more visible presence within the school. A new 'on-call' procedure and an isolation room have helped to reduce the number of disturbances in lessons and during social time. Inspectors noticed that, on the whole, relationships between staff and pupils were positive during and outside of lessons. There has been a slight increase in the proportion of pupils excluded on a fixed-term basis since the introduction of this policy. Leaders are monitoring this closely.

Leaders have taken determined action to improve the school environment. They have reviewed the arrangements for lunchtime and there are now more dedicated spaces for pupils to eat their lunch in comfort. There are now sports facilities to



enable pupils to participate in a range of purposeful activities at lunchtime. These changes mean that the school site is less congested during unstructured time. Pupils say that arrangements at lunchtime are now much better, despite the small size of the school canteen.

Leaders also took urgent action to refurbish all school toilets to help improve standards of hygiene and privacy. Pupils say that these areas are much improved compared to the time of the previous inspection.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned programme of personal, social and economic development learning, covering a wide range of themes that promote pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and fundamental British values. However, pupils were less clear about the purpose and importance of the daily 'ready to learn' sessions at the start of each school day.

Pupils are typically punctual to lessons. While pupils' attitudes in lessons have improved since the last inspection, their levels of concentration vary. When learning is not planned at the right level or is not sufficiently engaging, their concentration wanes and low-level disruption results. This was evident in some Year 7 and 8 lessons. Staff do not consistently challenge off-task behaviour.

The attendance of all pupils and, particularly, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities remains stubbornly below the national average. Current attendance has declined further compared to 2017. The proportion of pupils regularly absent from school is also increasing. Staff continue to work on improving the attendance of pupils, and they recognise the importance of continuing to develop strategies to tackle this issue.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

In 2017, pupils' attainment was well below national averages. Furthermore, pupils made considerably less progress by the end of key stage 4 than the national average. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not improving quickly enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress across all subjects. Leaders cautiously expect some improvement to pupils' outcomes in 2018 but these remain fragile and well below average overall.

Current school information indicates that disparities remain in how well pupils achieve in different subjects. Pupils' progress in a range of option subjects is much slower in comparison to their progress in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. This is partly due to some ill-considered curriculum decisions about early examination entry in some option subjects. However, these differences also reflect contrasts in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment between subject areas.

Leaders have taken action to improve the accuracy of assessment information and

the tracking of pupils' progress over time. They have introduced a new system to capture this information and have introduced opportunities for teachers to check standards with each other and ensure that work is being assessed correctly. However, it is too early to assess the impact and effectiveness of this system. Similarly, leaders have set up systems to monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils more closely. Staff have received training in how they can better meet the needs of these pupils. Although a range of strategies is being implemented to improve the provision for disadvantaged pupils, it is too soon to judge the effectiveness of these.

### **16-19 study programmes**

The previous inspection called for greater strategic support for the leader of the sixth form in improving the quality of education provided. Despite well-intentioned and enthusiastic leadership, improvements in the sixth form have been slow to come. The proportion of students successfully achieving a standard pass in GCSE English or mathematics is low. Students' attendance remains too low. Leaders have taken steps to address this for the new school year. Leaders acknowledge that the support for sixth-form leadership and the effectiveness of study programmes requires urgent attention, particularly the strategies for identifying and remedying underachievement.

### **External support**

Leaders swiftly commissioned a review of safeguarding procedures following the last inspection. The safeguarding children in education officer for Nottinghamshire has visited the school on three occasions and has provided strong and effective support for the school's designated safeguarding lead. Leaders have positively engaged with the review process and this has resulted in rapid improvements in the safeguarding arrangements for pupils at the school. This support is ongoing. Trustees and governors have benefited from an external review of effectiveness, provided by an external consultant. Governors have positively engaged with this process and it is expected that this support will continue into the new school year. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of how this development has sharpened the ability of governors to hold senior leaders to account for school improvement.