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Dear Mrs Umerah

Special measures monitoring inspection of Health Futures UTC

Following my visit with Lois Kelly, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 5-6 February 2019, 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 May 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 and action plans are fit for purpose

the school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Bianka Zemke
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2018.

- Improve teaching so that the progress of students in key stage 4 and the sixth form accelerates rapidly, by ensuring that teachers:
 - use information about students’ abilities, prior knowledge and individual needs when planning lessons
 - ask questions that deepen students’ understanding of their work
 - check on students’ understanding in lessons and take action when they do not understand what they are doing
 - have high expectations of the amount, organisation and quality of work that students do in class
 - use consistently the school’s behaviour systems and do not tolerate low-level disruption in lessons.
- Improve attendance by:
 - analysing attendance information to spot issues and trends
 - using this analysis to inform improvement strategies
 - impressing upon students and parents the importance of regular school attendance.
- Improve the sixth form by:
 - securing high-quality leadership of the sixth form
 - ensuring that students are recruited onto appropriate courses
 - increasing the 16 to 19 vocational focus and particularly links with employers in the health sector.
- Strengthen the unique educational character of the school, in line with its University Technical College (UTC) principles.
- Improve leadership by:
 - securing permanent, high-quality teachers
 - ensuring that the needs of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are met
 - providing effective careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) to students joining and already attending the school
 - ensuring that the pupil premium is used effectively to support disadvantaged

students

- ensuring that teachers' assessments of students' attainment are reliable
- ensuring that governors are able to hold leaders to account for the school's performance
- giving students a better understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

It is recommended that reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be carried out in order to determine how these aspects of leadership might be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 5 to 6 February 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and members of the governing board, including the chair of the board. The lead inspector held telephone conversations with an adviser from the Department for Education (DfE) and a colleague from a teaching school that provided a range of support to the school. Inspectors spoke with many pupils at breaktime, lunchtime and during lessons.

Context

One vice-principal has left the school and the roles of senior leaders have been revised, particularly their responsibilities for leading teaching and learning, leading on supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the oversight for disadvantaged pupils. New leadership of the sixth form has been put in place. Several teachers and support staff have left the school.

Since the section 5 report has been published, the number of pupils on roll at the school has reduced sharply. Far fewer pupils have been recruited into all year groups, but particularly into the sixth form.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The early signs of impact, brought about since the principal joined the school, have now developed into clear evidence of ongoing improvement in several areas of school life, including behaviour and teaching. New appointments to the senior leadership team, alongside revised responsibilities, have added to its capacity and effectiveness. The principal is supported well by senior leaders. She provides clear, direct and strong leadership. Staff appreciate her clarity of vision and they are keen to be part of the school's improvement. Morale, after a period of uncertainty, is now good.

Senior leaders know their school well. Their evaluation of its strengths and areas that need improvement is accurate and they have put in place effective plans to address its weaknesses. Consequently, improvement is already evident in several areas. Teaching is beginning to improve because leaders have made clear their expectations of teachers' planning. Additionally, leaders, with the help of a local teaching school, are providing regular training for all staff. Leaders have revised the school's behaviour policy, which is now more effectively used by staff, although not yet consistently. Consequently, the amount of low-level disruption in lessons has reduced.

Senior leaders have begun to address the weaknesses in the curriculum identified in

the section 5 inspection report, particularly the school's missing ethos and education around health and social care and effective careers advice and guidance for their pupils. Consequently, they have worked hard to engage employers and pupils now complete a range of practical elements in their course work on the topic of health. Pupils now have more visits from healthcare professionals and visit providers themselves. Leaders do not yet ensure that teachers routinely use the school's specialist equipment to complement health and social care education. Year 12 students all complete work experience and now receive bespoke and personalised careers information. The new curriculum vision and intent is clear, precise and completely centred around 'care values'. Its implementation is planned for September 2019.

Leaders' use of the pupil premium, having been ineffective, is at an early stage of development. Teachers now know who the disadvantaged pupils in their classes are. Senior and middle leaders made these pupils a high priority. Staff know that current disadvantaged pupils remain a high priority. The review of the pupil premium use, recommended in the section 5 inspection report, has been completed. Leaders have acted on the recommendations made in the report and, consequently, pupils are now benefiting from interventions and targeted support that are showing tentative signs of improving their progress. Although a written strategy and spending plan exist, leaders are still to determine how effective these strategies are being.

Provision for pupils with SEND has improved. The leader has now completed the necessary training to fulfil her role. Since September 2018, leaders have provided teachers with helpful information about pupils with SEND. This is in the form of a detailed plan for each pupil, containing suggested classroom strategies to meet these pupils' needs. Teachers are making more use of this information when they plan classroom activities, although not yet consistently well across the curriculum.

Middle leaders form a committed and hard-working team, determined to see improvement in their subjects. They are well supported by senior leaders. They are beginning to use assessment information to identify pupils who are falling behind with their work. Although they are aware of weaknesses in teaching and pupils' achievement within their departments, they do not yet work as a team to address those specific weaknesses. This task currently falls to senior leaders.

Senior leaders have improved the sixth-form provision. For example, entry requirements for courses on offer are now appropriate and students are recruited onto courses that match their aspirations and interests. Leaders evaluate effectively how well students are performing and support them when it is needed. Students now routinely benefit from work-related learning and more visits from healthcare professionals. They receive appropriate careers advice and now attend more off-site visits to settings that further their learning. Sixth-form students speak positively about their experience at school. However, not many current Year 11 pupils express an interest or desire to stay on at the sixth form. This is because of their previous

experiences at school. Leaders are aware of this and plans are in place to re-market the sixth form.

Leaders have engaged effectively, and with enthusiasm, with the support offered from a local teaching school. Work completed to improve the quality of teaching has seen staff being upskilled to deliver training within the school for themselves. The support work has ensured that the school now has robust and effective structures in place to continue its improvement work.

Governance has improved considerably since the section 5 inspection. The governing board now assures itself of the accuracy of information and leaders' work, and provides effective support and challenge for leaders. Its members know the school well and focus sharply on those areas that need to improve. The recruitment of new members onto the board has strengthened it further. There are now members with expertise in education and the field of healthcare. It carries out its oversight of finance and safeguarding diligently. Leaders have commissioned the external review of governance, recommended in the section 5 inspection report, and many points have consequently been addressed. However, the recommended strategic plan for governance has yet to be completed. Inspectors deem this plan to be important in order for governors to be able to monitor and analyse successfully their own effectiveness.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is very variable across the school but has improved since the section 5 inspection. Leaders have introduced clear expectations about how lessons should be planned and teachers are consistently adhering to these expectations. Many pupils who spoke to inspectors said that teaching is better this year than last. Several cited the improved behaviour as a reason for this. Relationships are generally positive across the school, although pupils still feel that teaching varies too much across the school. Teachers' increasing awareness and prioritisation of disadvantaged pupils is beginning to see their progress improve.

The section 5 inspection highlighted weakness in several subjects. Teaching in mathematics and English is now, for the most part, effective. In science and health and social care, its quality remains mixed. Expectations of the quality, quantity and presentation of work that pupils produce in lessons across most subjects, remain variable and too low. Not enough teachers have high expectations of their pupils.

Where teaching remains weak, teachers do not match activities well to pupils' abilities or what they already know and understand. Sometimes, this means that most-able pupils find the work too easy and do not learn as much as they could. At other times, the work is too difficult and so pupils are unable to attempt it successfully. When pupils cannot do the work set, they become distracted and low-level disruption occurs. Inspectors observed several instances where this was the case. Where teaching was stronger and teachers had high expectations of pupils,

inspectors did not observe any low-level disruption of learning.

The quality of teachers' checks on pupils' learning in lessons remains mixed. Some teachers carefully check that pupils understand what they are learning, through skilful questioning. Other teachers do not check that pupils understand their work and so are unaware that they are finding work too easy or too hard or that they have simply misunderstood a concept. The feedback pupils receive is now more effective in supporting their learning. Pupils say that it helps them to identify where they have gone wrong and how to improve their work. The systematic checking of pupils' literacy skills is a strength. Consequently, pupils' work shows fewer spelling or grammar errors.

Although the school has some specialist equipment available, it is not routinely used to underpin pupils' learning in health and social care. Pupils say that they would like more opportunities to practise their skills in the school's 'simulation hospital ward'. Leaders acknowledge that more could be done to ensure that the limited resource is used more effectively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Some low-level disruption of lessons remains, but its prevalence is reducing. This is because teaching is improving, relationships between pupils and their teachers are now more positive and teachers are using the school's behaviour policy increasingly and consistently. The great majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school during breaktimes and lunchtimes. Pupils are mostly courteous and polite to each other and to adults. The school is calm and orderly throughout the day. Incidents of poor behaviour have lessened.

Overall attendance, although improving and close to the national average for some year groups, remains below the national average for secondary schools. Revised procedures to promote good attendance and address poor attendance are beginning to have an impact on the attendance of pupils and groups of pupils who do not attend school regularly. For example, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, which has been weak over recent years, has improved this year. Leaders know that more needs to be done to ensure that attendance is in line with national figures.

Pupils feel safe in school. Inspectors spoke with many pupils, in all year groups, during the inspection. Almost all told inspectors that they feel safe in school. Pupils expressed a great disappointment in the school's curriculum. They continue to feel that the education they were promised is not the education they are receiving. Leaders have acknowledged this and the curriculum plan for September 2019 is designed to address this issue. There are many short-term strategies that leaders could deploy now to improve this situation. During this inspection, some of these strategies were discussed and leaders now plan to include some in the very near future.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders have introduced several structures and processes to ensure that the information they collect about pupils' progress is accurate. Information is now validated and externally moderated to ensure that leaders have the information they need to intervene when and where necessary. Middle leaders are now better placed to support this work within their own subject areas.

Outcomes in 2018 remained weak and saw little sign of improvements. Pupils made better progress in the school's specialist field of health and social care in 2018 with three quarters of pupils achieving a level 2 qualification. Disadvantaged pupils' progress remained poor and most-able pupils made limited progress and did not achieve their full potential. Current pupils' work, although still not at the standard it should be, shows signs of improvements. Staff training and the consequent improvement in teaching is beginning to impact on pupils' learning, although at a slow rate.

In those areas where teaching is improving, the progress of current pupils is beginning to improve accordingly. However, the extent of improvement varies considerably between subjects and sometimes within subjects. For example, in most English lessons and some mathematics lessons, current pupils benefit from more routine opportunities to stretch and challenge their thinking. As a result, pupils, especially the most able, make better progress. Leaders need to ensure that all staff have high expectations of pupils and what they can achieve.

External support

Wood Green Academy Teaching School has provided the school with support in several areas. Much has already proved effective, but for some its impact is yet to be seen. Support with staff training and improving the overall quality of teaching has seen teaching improve, especially in mathematics and English. Work to upskill the school's own staff so that they are able to disseminate this training within the school has ensured that more bespoke training is now taking place internally, although this is not widespread yet. Senior leaders also receive some bespoke mentoring and support from the chief executive officer and executive headteacher of the Warwick Manufacturing Academy trust. This support is invaluable to ensure that the school more fully meets its unique characteristic as a University Technology College.