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Mrs Mandy Wilton
Cranbury College
Cranbury Road
Reading
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Dear Mrs Wilton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cranbury College

Following my visit to your school on 23 June 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that class teachers use information about what pupils know and can do to plan learning that enables them to enhance their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Evidence

During the inspection, separate meetings were held with the headteacher along with other senior leaders, middle leaders, a group of staff from the primary site, a group of Year 10 pupils, members of the governing body (management group), and with a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The leader of learning accompanied the inspector on short visits to

observe pupils learning in key stage 3 lessons. A selection of work from pupils in key stages 2, 3 and 4 was scrutinised. The new leader of learning scrutinised the work belonging to pupils in key stages 3 and 4 alongside the inspector. The inspector reviewed the school's own evaluation of its current performance and the most recent action plan, and examined online records relating to behaviour and safety.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a number of teachers with responsibility for subjects or key stages have left and new staff have been appointed. The teacher in charge of primary provision left in September 2016 as did the lead teacher for English. The teacher in charge of post-16 provision also left at the end of the spring term 2016. The primary teacher left before the Easter holidays in 2017 and a temporary teacher was appointed for the summer term. Two new primary teachers have been appointed for September 2017, including a primary lead teacher. A new leader of learning was appointed at the start of summer term 2017.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you and your staff have strengthened many aspects of the college's work. In so doing you have fully embraced the recommendations in the previous inspection report. You are resolute in your determination to provide the best support you can for all your pupils. You have developed your leadership team well. Senior leaders and governors have dedicatedly stepped up to the challenge of improving the school. Senior leaders now contribute fully to formulating the long-term direction of the school. You have also strengthened the impact of leadership across the school, by inviting key middle leaders to be part of the extended senior leadership team. They have benefited from this experience as well as provided useful expertise.

Following significant changes, which you have successfully overseen, a number of essential new systems are now in place. These systems provide you, and your staff, with a detailed overview of how safe pupils are, how well they behave and how much progress they are making. However, you rightly identify that teachers are not consistently using the information they have about pupils' starting points and progress when planning learning. In addition, you recognise that not enough has been done to ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils' learning are accurate.

You have worked well with mainstream schools in the vicinity to develop a new college-wide system for tracking pupils' progress towards end-of-year targets. The system is now fully up and running. However, you recognise that the end-of-year targets you have set for pupils who have academic potential but have underachieved so far are not always aspirational enough. You have strong plans in place to rectify this. Senior leaders are wisely using information from the improved tracking system to identify pupils who are not making enough progress. They

ensure that these pupils are provided with a raft of carefully planned additional support. Senior leaders are also using information from the tracking system to question lead teachers as to the reasons why some pupils' progress has been too slow. Some lead teachers' responses are incisive because they keep a close eye on pupils' progress across all sites, as well as how well any gaps in pupils' learning are being filled. However, this depth of understanding is not yet a consistent feature of subject leadership across the school. In addition, teachers are not yet consistently using information from their tracking of pupils' progress to ensure that planned learning is challenging enough and also enables any gaps to be filled.

You have strengthened your admission arrangements so they are consistently effective across all college sites. Now all pupils are assessed so teachers can get a detailed overview of their starting points. In mathematics, teachers use the information from baseline assessments well to set appropriate targets and plan learning that builds on the skills pupils have already secured. In addition, pastoral staff ensure they gain as full a picture as possible of any barriers to learning and any specific additional needs pupils have. Pastoral staff make good use of this information when planning their one-to-one work with pupils. Middle leaders also use this information to good effect when they check that pupils have been placed on the right learning programmes.

You have ensured there are well-planned opportunities for staff to learn from good practice within the school and also from colleagues in mainstream schools. Staff commented on how beneficial they found collaborating with colleagues from both within the school and further afield. The newly developed training programme for staff dovetails well with these collaborative opportunities. As a result, some aspects of effective practice are now consistent across the college. For example, teachers are now providing pupils with helpful feedback, which includes suggestions about how pupils can improve their work. You have evaluated the impact of the training programme, including opportunities for collaboration with colleagues, rigorously. The new leader of learning has well thought out plans to develop the programme further. She rightly identifies that there have not been enough opportunities for teachers to check the accuracy of their assessments with colleagues from other schools. This is especially crucial for those subjects where there have been significant changes to the way national tests and examinations are assessed.

You have also successfully developed the way you record concerns, incidents of poor behaviour and safeguarding issues. There is now one college-wide approach, which you ensure is used consistently. Concerns and behaviour incidents are seamlessly linked to each pupil's individual record. Pupils' records are kept on a secure online site so all the staff involved in supporting a pupil can update the record easily, as and when it is appropriate. A chronological account of any dealings with outside agencies is also helpfully included as part of each pupil's individual record. Designated leaders collate the most important information from these individual pupil records efficiently, resulting in a detailed overview of safeguarding and behaviour across the different sites. The breadth and depth of this overview

helps you to keep a close watch on a number of pupils about whom you have concerns. You, your leaders and the governors also use this overview to evaluate the effectiveness of your provision. The overview supports you and your staff well when making referrals to the local authority's safeguarding officers and on occasions when you request for support from external agencies to be stepped up.

Governance has improved and the governing body has fully taken on board the recommendations from the review of governance which was undertaken last year. In particular, governors are much more focused on evaluating the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' learning and well-being. In order to gain as much insight as possible into this, a special committee with a monitoring and quality assurance brief has been established. Governors who sit on this committee are using information from a range of different monitoring activities to evaluate how well actions outlined in the college's detailed action plan are working. As a result of their astute evaluations, they have challenged leaders to make some well-focused additional changes. These changes include developing the curriculum and working more closely with peripatetic teachers at the hospital school.

External support

The local authority has supported the school by carrying out rigorous monitoring in relation to actions outlined in the action plan. On the monitoring visit carried out by the local authority earlier this year, representatives rightly identified that in some areas the school's progress was too slow. In part, this was because the school was not able to recruit for some key positions until recently. Since successfully appointing for a key position to develop learning, the school's progress towards an Ofsted judgement of good has now picked up. Effective collaboration with other schools is assisting the school in its current efforts to recruit new staff. The local authority's support has not had as much impact on recruitment as on other aspects. The school has worked well with other mainstream schools to develop new approaches to assessment and tracking. Recommendations from the helpful reviews conducted by external consultants have supported leaders in making necessary changes.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector