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4 March 2022

Christian Cavanagh
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Dear Mr Cavanagh

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Kemnal Technology College

Following my visit with Annabel Davies, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), and Jonathan Newby, Ofsted Inspector (OI), to your school on 1 February 2022, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in May 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. We discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

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

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer or equivalent of The Kemnal Academies Trust, the regional

schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bromley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Hallett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 1 February 2022

Context

The executive headteacher joined the school just prior to the inspection in May 2019, when the school was judged to have serious weaknesses. Since that inspection, new appointments have been made to the senior leadership team to increase capacity. The school is fully staffed, and staff turnover is low.

The chair of governors was in the post prior to the last inspection. Since then, there have been many other new appointments to the governing body

COVID-19 has had an impact on the school's staff and pupils. Pupils' behaviour has been affected because pupils have forgotten how to get along and work with each other. Staff's well-being has been affected through illness and isolation. Staff and pupils found it challenging to work in bubbles over time. Leaders have taken account of staff's and pupils' well-being and made sensible adjustments to their plans where necessary.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

The headteacher and senior leaders have developed a strong team ethos and set high expectations for the school community. Leaders are ambitious, and this is widely shared across the staff team. Leaders and staff at all levels have been involved in developing the vision for the curriculum, 'Kemnal hearts and minds'.

This new vision encapsulates the values and ambition the school has to prepare its pupils for adult life. This includes academic, social and cultural readiness. From this starting point, staff have set out clear intentions and developed curriculum plans for subjects.

The curriculum development team, including early career teachers (ECTs), has developed key features and common strands for all subjects. These are 'the Kemnal keys' and include core knowledge, vocabulary and important ideas that pupils must know and remember in order to understand the work.

This is starting to have a positive impact on pupils' own aspirations and the quality of their work, particularly in older year groups. Teachers' subject expertise is strong. However, there is some variation in the quality of subject thinking and implementation of the new curriculum. It is not consistent across subjects and teachers.

Sometimes, pupils are given too much new knowledge at once. Pupils switch off because activities and tasks have not been broken down into small chunks and they cannot consolidate their understanding or practise new skills. The purpose of activities is not clear to pupils.

In contrast, where the purpose is clear, teachers build carefully on pupils' prior knowledge, teach new vocabulary and choose activities to help pupils learn. In these cases, pupils' recall and understanding of complex concepts are strong. For example, in English, pupils can confidently discuss the message of Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol' or the motivation of the characters in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is improving. The newly refurbished base for pupils with SEND provides a stimulating and positive learning environment. Leaders ensure that staff in the base are trained to support pupils effectively. The support for pupils with SEND in the wider school is not as strong and teachers and support staff are less confident.

Leaders' actions to improve reading are having a positive impact. The strategic leadership of reading is effective. There are many different initiatives, but leaders make sure that they are all joined up and complement each other. All the reading schemes and projects have a clear purpose and are carefully targeted at different groups of pupils.

Reading is a regular activity in tutor time. Staff are trained in reading to teenagers and supporting them in their choice of books. Leaders prepare synopses of novels to interest pupils as suggested reading. Pupils know it is the school's priority. They can talk about the books they are reading and how they are making progress.

The support for weaker readers is strong. Staff are trained in phonics and pupils improve their reading through intervention groups. Pupils read books where the words match the sounds they know well. Leaders choose the books thoughtfully, with stories and graphics that appeal to secondary-age pupils.

Following the disruption to schooling from COVID-19, leaders and staff are working hard to reset expectations and routines for pupils' behaviour. Pupils generally behave better in lessons because adults set consistent expectations. Around the school, there is more variation in the expectations of behaviour and routines are less clear. Pupils do not always respond to staff requests.

Older pupils are more aware of the need for respectful conduct towards others. They are keen to develop a sense of community with younger pupils. Pupils are aware of how to stay safe. Bullying sometimes happens but pupils are confident it will be tackled quickly if issues arise. Overall, pupils feel that teachers provide a secure environment and support, with daily visible supervision in the locality.

Inclusion leaders and the inclusion team are focused on helping pupils to understand and regulate their own behaviour. The number of exclusions is still high, but leaders have developed new partnerships with external organisations to support pupils at risk of exclusion. This work has not had time to have an impact.

The school's strength is its team ethos. The headteacher is committed to ensuring that all staff have a role to play in contributing to and securing improvement. Almost all staff are

members of key teams taking this work forward, such as the curriculum team or the inclusion team. Staff, including ECTs, feel well supported, including by the trust. Their workload is well managed, and communication is strong. Governors and the trust challenge and support leaders well.

Additional support

The support from the Kemnal Academies Trust has had a positive impact. Lead practitioners in the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) and humanities have worked with trust lead practitioners to develop the curriculum. The trust has also supported senior leaders with regular monitoring visits and support and training for governors.

Evidence

The inspectors observed the school's work, including visits to lessons. They scrutinised documents. They met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative of the multi-academy trust. Inspectors also met with subject leaders, teachers and other staff. Inspectors met with pupils and talked to them informally around the school at breaktime and lunchtime.