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Mrs D Newsome  
Babington Community Technology College  
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Dear Mrs Newsome

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Babington Community Technology College**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Cheryl Jackson and I inspected your school on 18 January 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your National Challenge Adviser and Chair of the Governing Body, both of whom found time to talk to me at such short notice. As part of this visit, the procedures for safeguarding students were checked and found to meet government requirements.

Since the last inspection, the large influx of Somali students has slowed down but high numbers of Czech and Slovak Roma students have entered the school. Mobility is high and 78 students have arrived since the start of this academic year, many of whom have had no formal education prior to their arrival at the school. A new head of mathematics and a new head of science have been appointed.

As a result of the inspection on November 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Students enter the school with attainment that is well below the national average. At the last inspection, while students' attainment was still low when they left in Year 11, it was acknowledged that overall the college was rapidly improving, with significant acceleration over the previous eighteen months. This is still the case. Every student is known as an individual, including their attendance and predicted test levels or grades. Students' attainment has continued to improve since the last

inspection. The percentage of students gaining five A\* to C GCSE grades is now in line with national averages for the first time in the school's history and rose by 23% from 2009 outcomes. This represents a significant improvement. However, the percentage of students who gained five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics remains 19% below the national average, although an 11% improvement on 2009 figures. Attainment in both English and mathematics has improved since the last inspection and outcomes are now above the national floor targets. Attainment in English remains better than mathematics, although in both subjects students are now making better progress, especially at KS3. The gap is narrowing and attainment in the two subjects is projected to be similar in the 2011 GCSE examinations and show a further increase in students' achievement compared with the 2010 outcomes.

The policy of entering students early for English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 has been reviewed. They are now entered for English in Year 10 and mathematics in the November of Year 11 when they are better prepared to succeed. One-to-one tutoring and academic mentoring, as well as small group targeted support, has been particularly successful. Data over the last three years from 2008-2010 shows that students are making better progress at Key Stage 3 from their low starting points and more are attaining Level 5 or better in the core subjects: 67% in English; 64% in mathematics and 71% in science. The trend of whole-school improvement is accelerating. The behaviour of students has also improved significantly. In lessons and around the school, students were well behaved, polite, courteous and eager to learn.

Leaders and managers have worked tirelessly to improve the quality of teaching and learning under the outstanding leadership of the Principal, ably supported by some strong and effective senior staff. Aspirational targets based on three levels progress over two key stages are ensuring that the school exceeds its challenging targets. A recent review by the local authority and National Challenge Adviser judged the quality of teaching in mathematics to be good or better in all lessons observed. The improvements to the mathematics teaching in particular have come about through the good leadership of the new head of faculty; rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning; and focused support for individual mathematics teachers through modelling and dissemination of good practice. Senior leaders are very accurate in their own self evaluation, including teaching quality. The quality of teaching across all subjects is good. As part of this monitoring visit, inspectors conducted joint observations with the Principal and Vice Principal of twelve lessons, including six mathematics lessons. All were judged to be satisfactory or better. In the outstanding lessons, teachers' planning was well matched to the needs of all students and they were excited and engaged in the good range of learning activities. In the less successful lessons, teacher questioning did not sufficiently probe or extend learning and insufficient opportunities were created to check that students had understood the work. An effective programme of co-coaching between staff is ensuring that good practice is embedded and teachers improve teaching quality from good to outstanding. There is clear evidence of the improving capacity of leaders

and managers at all levels to accurately identify areas of weaker performance; implement key actions with a specific measurable focus; and evaluate the impact of their actions. Subject leaders for English and mathematics also share this ambition to improve student outcomes and realise that there is still work to be done to improve achievement for all groups of students. Currently, girls make better progress than boys. Some students still underachieve, for example higher attaining students and some school action students on the special needs register.

The school was also asked to raise attendance closer to the national average and to make parents and students aware of the impact of poor attendance on attainment. The school has implemented a wide range of support strategies to improve attendance, including targeted parents' events; attendance packs for every family; and mentoring of identified students. Despite these best efforts, attendance has stubbornly remained low for a number of years. However, there is a slow improvement trend in overall attendance. The figures for the last reporting year were up 0.4% to 90.5%, although still well below the national average of 93.1% and 92.6% for similar schools. The figures show that more impressive progress has been made with the percentage of persistent absentees, which at 8% shows an improvement of 1.5% on the previous year. Attendance figures so far this academic year continue to improve, although at 91.2% are still below the national average.

The technology college specialism has had limited whole-school impact since the last inspection due to the National Challenge priority focus of raising attainment in English and mathematics. This notwithstanding, the specialist technology subject results all improved in the 2010 examinations to a record high.

The school has received variable support from outside agencies such as the National Challenge Adviser and the local authority consultants. There has been some particularly effective external adviser support in science where a determined focus on developing assessment strategies has improved outcomes.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

**Clive Kempton HMI**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2009**

- Close the gap in achievement between mathematics and English by continuing to focus sharply on improving teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics.
- Raise attendance closer to national figures by:
  - maintaining and further strengthening current successful strategies
  - making explicit for parents and students the relationship between attendance and attainment.
- Improve the proportion of good and better teaching by further increasing consistency in the application of college policies and practices.