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2 December 2010

Mrs Godden
Executive Headteacher
The Community College, Bishop's Castle
Brampton Road
Bishops Castle
SY9 5AY

Dear Mrs Godden

**Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of The Community College,
Bishop's Castle**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your college on 1 December 2010, and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass my thanks to the staff, students, governors and the local authority representative for their help during the inspection.

Since the college was last inspected, there have been significant changes to staffing. The headteacher was not in college at the time of the last inspection due to ill health. He retired at the end of the summer term. An acting headteacher was appointed until the end of the summer term. An executive headteacher has been in post since September 2010. A substantive headteacher has been appointed for the summer term.

As a result of the inspection on 26–27 May 2010, the college 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 college is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

As a result of changes in staffing, the college was slow to get started on improvements after being given a notice to improve. The rate of progress has accelerated this term under the leadership of the executive headteacher, who has swiftly brought about a strong and effective focus on improving the quality of leadership at all levels and raising the quality of teaching in order to increase the pace of learning. The improved climate for learning is beginning to have a positive impact on students' overall achievement. In the lessons observed jointly with the executive headteacher, students showed positive attitudes to learning and

consistently made satisfactory progress. They were enthusiastic and readily responded to questions raised by teachers. They worked well together and showed maturity in moving around the classroom and the college. This is the result of the college's effective action to improve teaching, and the good relationships established amongst students and with teachers.

The development of a robust tracking system has led to greater challenge in lessons, and assessment information is used more effectively to plan work which is matched to students' abilities. Any student who is underperforming is quickly identified and appropriate strategies are put in place to support them. The college's assessment information shows that progress is improving, including for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Marking of students' work consistently informs them how well they are achieving, identifies errors and advises them how to improve. In the best examples, students are also given the opportunity to respond to the teachers' comments. Teachers sometimes encourage students to use 'talking partners' and other strategies to check their own progress and that of their classmates. However, these approaches are not yet consistently applied throughout the school. The humanities specialist status continues to make a good contribution to improving standards within the specialist subjects of geography and history. However, the college has not yet enabled the good practice in these subjects to be routinely shared across other curriculum areas. The provision for religious education is currently under review.

The capacity for sustained improvement continues to grow. Systems for monitoring and improving provision are beginning to have a noticeable impact. Teachers report that there is now a real sense of direction and expectation and, together with leaders and support staff, they share a collective sense of responsibility and ambition for moving the college forward. Staff are empowered and supported to bring about the necessary improvements. Regular meetings to discuss students' progress provide an effective forum for identifying and tackling underachievement. Leaders at all levels have a much better understanding of the levels of progress being made across the college, and monitoring at whole-college level accurately identifies the strengths and areas for further improvement based upon secure evidence. This information is used effectively to disseminate good practice and hold staff to account.

The local authority's statement of action meets requirements. It is a comprehensive plan providing clear support and challenge for the college. The local authority has provided good support, well-planned training and expert guidance through a range of consultants. College morale has improved and the senior leaders, staff and governing body are determined to move even further as improvements become embedded. Parents and carers are informed of changes within the college through newsletters and meetings. A recent questionnaire returned from parents and carers, however, revealed that communication with them is not yet fully effective.

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

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010

- Improve the quality of leadership at all levels to ensure that:
 - there is a clear strategic direction and ambition which is understood and shared by all staff
 - staff are empowered and supported to bring about the necessary improvements and they take responsibility for improving their own practice
 - monitoring accurately identifies the strengths and areas for further improvement based upon secure evidence and is then used to effectively disseminate good practice and hold staff to account.

- Raise the quality of teaching and increase the pace of learning by ensuring:
 - a greater challenge in lessons
 - that assessment information is used effectively to plan work which is matched to students' abilities and thus raise aspiration
 - marking consistently informs students how well they are achieving, identifying errors and advising them how to improve.