

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
BRISTOL
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0845 123 6001
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Direct
email: stephen.godden@tribalgroup.com



14 February 2011

Mrs J Anslow
Headteacher
Woodlands Community College
Minstead Avenue
Southampton
Hampshire
SO18 5FW

Dear Mrs Anslow

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Woodlands Community College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Graham Saltmarsh and I inspected your college on 3 February 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 particular thanks to students with whom we held discussions.

The number of students on roll has fallen slightly since the previous inspection. One parent governor has left the governing body and 12 full-time permanent teachers have also left the college and been replaced. Since the last inspection, a school improvement partnership has been established with a local outstanding school.

As a result of the inspection on 11 and 12 November 2009, 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 has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

With the support of senior leaders, you have continued to provide the college with strong leadership that is clearly focused on raising students' attainment and improving their attendance. Systems for monitoring and evaluation are robust and a good plan is in place to drive further improvement. There are good systems to track the progress of students, and those who are underachieving are quickly identified and provided with effective support. This, plus a range of revision classes and individual mentoring for older students, is having a positive impact on students' progress.



The trend of rising attainment reported in the previous inspection report continued in 2010. The percentage of students attaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades rose significantly. The percentage of students attaining this measure including English and mathematics also rose faster than the national average. Inspection evidence and the college's tracking data indicate that Year 11 attainment will rise rapidly again this summer. However, although attainment is moving closer to national averages, it still remains low. The progress made by students between Years 7 and 11 is continuing to improve. This is evident in the rapidly improving Key Stage 2 to Key stage 4 contextual value added figure for the college and in the improved progress seen in lessons during this inspection. Some Year 11 middle-ability boys did not attain the results they were capable of in their GCSE examinations in 2010; however, this issue has been addressed and middle-ability boys are now making better progress.

The quality of teaching in the college is regularly and robustly monitored. Joint observations undertaken during this inspection confirmed the accuracy of the leadership team's judgement of the quality of teaching in lessons. As a result of this monitoring, and effective support and training, teaching in the college has improved since the previous inspection. There is now a greater consistency of good and better teaching across the college. A focus on developing teachers' use of assessment information to plan lessons that meets the needs of all students has proved successful. In the majority of lessons observed, teachers had appropriately matched tasks to students' prior knowledge and understanding, enabling them to make good or better progress. However, this is still not consistently the case across all lessons. The quality of marking has also improved since the previous inspection, with teachers giving students clear and helpful advice about how to improve their work.

Students reported that teaching and behaviour have improved since the previous inspection. Students felt there were good, supportive relationships between staff and students, and inspectors also identified this as a strong feature in the lessons observed. Older students, in particular, were grateful for the extra help teachers gave them outside of lessons and they also felt the courses they were following were well matched to their needs. This improved climate for learning is having a positive impact on students' enjoyment of school. The percentage of students attending college is rising strongly. Attendance since the start of this academic year is 91.2%. This is a large improvement on the 88% seen at the time of the previous inspection, but still remains well below average. The importance of good attendance has a higher profile in the college and a second attendance officer has been employed to help reduce the percentage of students who are persistently absent. This, combined with more effective working with the educational welfare service, is having a positive impact. The percentage of students who are persistently absent from college has significantly reduced since the time of the previous inspection, although it is still above the national average. The punctuality of students at the start of the day has also improved, although this remains an issue for the school to address.

Specialist status in science and engineering has played a role in the college's improvement. It has helped improve information and communication resources, which has positively impacted on students' learning and broadened students' learning experiences through stronger links with local business and industry. Advanced skills teachers in science and engineering have played a role in improving teaching across the college. Robust and regular support and challenge from the college's National Challenge Adviser have been helpful in promoting improvements. Partnership working with a local outstanding school has also helped drive improvement, particularly in mathematics.

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

Peter Sanderson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve attainment so that it is broadly in line with national standards by July 2011 by:
 - applying the strengths seen in some good and outstanding teaching more consistently in all classrooms
 - make better use of the existing good quality assessment information to plan lessons and set learning outcomes for all pupils across all subjects
 - ensure that all pupils make good progress in lessons by setting tasks and employing resources appropriate to each individual's ability.

- Improve attendance to the national average by December 2011 by reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistent absentees, by working with parents and carers, pupils and appropriate outside agencies to secure everyone's urgent and whole-hearted contribution to this priority.