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24 March 2011

Mr Keller
Guthlaxton College Wigston
Station Road
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Dear Mr Keller

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Guthlaxton College Wigston

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your college on 23 March 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 students for taking the time to talk to us.

As a result of the inspection on 1 December 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

In 2010, attainment was below average but the proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics improved significantly from 2009. Progress in English was significantly above expectations in 2009 and 2010. Achievement in mathematics has improved since 2009 and the majority of students now make better than expected progress. College leaders have carefully analysed the reasons behind the remaining areas of students' underachievement and are implementing appropriate strategies to tackle them. These include curriculum changes such as the introduction of new vocational and foundation learning courses and focused intervention for the most vulnerable learners. Support from local authority consultants, alongside interventions supported by Gaining Ground partner secondary colleges, is having a beneficial impact on student achievement. The college's current assessment information and other inspection evidence show that most students are on track to make even better progress this year.



Senior and middle leaders have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Senior managers and faculty leaders carry out a programme of regular observations. Staff training and a targeted coaching programme have been successful in decreasing the incidence of inadequate teaching and increasing the proportion of good lessons. The most successful lessons include clear learning objectives. Teachers display enthusiasm for their subject and high expectations of students. There is careful development of listening, thinking and observational skills. As a result, students become more confident and independent in their learning. Less successful lessons are characterised by teachers talking too much or directing questions so that only a few students are required to respond. There is too little checking of student learning in the course of the lesson and teachers do not make enough use of information on students' prior attainment to plan appropriately challenging activities for all ability levels. As a result, the pace of learning slows. The quality of marking varies considerably, with a significant amount of marking that is uninformative and infrequent. The most effective marking gives students clear written information about what they have achieved and how they can improve.

The college's leaders have significantly improved the way they gather and use assessment information. The new tracking system has been effective in highlighting underachievement and increasing staff expectations for the performance of all students. Faculty and pastoral leaders are increasingly confident in using assessment data to develop focused intervention strategies for individual students. The rigorous monitoring of the academic performance of students in Year 11, and support for any who fall behind, has been a major factor in improving academic standards this year.

The restructuring of middle leader roles and responsibilities has considerably strengthened the leadership capacity of the college. The systems for monitoring the work of the college are now rigorous. These now include frequent and thorough faculty reviews, which mean that senior leaders have a good understanding of faculty strengths and weaknesses. There are now ambitious strategic improvement plans at whole-college and faculty level. These plans carefully align whole-college and faculty priorities, although they lack specific detail on the areas of teaching and learning that need most attention. Attendance has improved considerably since the previous inspection but poor punctuality remains a significant concern.

Through the specialist subject of performing arts, the college works intensively in dance, drama and music to enhance the curriculum for younger pupils in feeder schools. Partnerships with local and national theatre groups enable subjects across the college to adopt more creative approaches to learning. Links with feeder high schools have been further strengthened through the development of a common Key Stage 4 curriculum that supports highly effective transition between schools.

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

Deborah James
Additional Inspector

Once the school has had 24 hours to report any factual inaccuracies, the post-inspection letter is copied as appropriate to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – except for academies
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation.

The letters should also be copied electronically to:

each member of the inspection team,

A copy with editing marked up should be forwarded to the:

Lead inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that all students make at least good progress by:
 - using information gained from assessments to plan activities that are suitably challenging for students of all abilities
 - listening to, observing and questioning students during lessons to gauge their understanding, and adapting tasks according to their individual needs.
- Ensure that all middle and senior leaders play a full role in driving improvement and ensuring the quality of teaching and learning across the college is of a consistently high standard.
- Improve punctuality in the sixth form by ensuring teachers challenge all late arrivals to form time more robustly.