

Serco Inspections
Cedar House
21 William Street
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 1LH

Ofsted
T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk
Serco 0121 683 3261
Direct T 0121 683 3888



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Mrs Jane Brown
New College Leicester
Glenfield Road
Leicester
LE3 6DN

Dear Mrs Brown

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of New College Leicester

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your college together with Joseph Skivington, additional inspector, on 18 May 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also thank the Chair of the Governing Body and the students that we met.

Since the previous inspection in October 2009, there have been significant changes in the structure of governance and in the leadership of the college. In 2010, the college formed a trust with a number of other education providers and the local authority as trustees. Appointments have also been made to further strengthen the leadership team.

As a result of the inspection on 7 October 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.

Good progress has been made in raising students' achievement from their very low starting points. In 2010, students' progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 was broadly satisfactory; however, standards remained well below average overall. Validated data shows that the percentage of students gaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics, although still too low, improved in 2010. Well-targeted intervention strategies, notably in the core subjects, have resulted in students of all abilities making satisfactory progress. In 2010, results at GCSE were the best in the college's history, with 65% of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE. The college's internal tracking information shows that this trend of improvement is continuing and, for 2011, levels of attainment are expected to be closer to national averages. Our observations coupled with results already gained through early examination entry, confirm the college's view that standards and the



progress that students make has improved further. These improvements are the result of developments in the quality of teaching and learning and the targeted support for individual students who are identified as underachieving. The college systematically tracks students' progress against their challenging academic targets to ensure that teachers are able to correct any shortcomings in good time. As a result, the college is well on track to reach the floor targets by the expected date set out in the previous inspection report.

The college judges the quality of teaching as satisfactory with just over half of lessons good or better. During our visit, we observed 20 part-lessons, around half of which were good. This suggests a similar picture. Good lessons are marked by pace, and challenge where teachers plan effectively to build progressively on previous learning. In the satisfactory lessons, these features are less evident. Action has been taken to strengthen aspects of teaching such as the quality and consistency of planning. Recommendations from lesson observations are built into the performance management of all teachers, and effective support from the coaching team is provided where needed. Regular in-service training, learning walks, book scrutinies and rigorous quality assurance all contribute. Literacy support, commencing in Year 7, is provided by qualified teaching assistants. More challenge, particularly for high ability students, is built into lesson plans. There are still areas of development in teaching skills which the college is aware of and is steadily targeting.

Assessment is making a positive contribution to raising levels of attainment. Level descriptors in the front of folders and books show clearly grade differences as the year progresses. As a result, students' progress is immediately obvious, especially in the core subjects. In these subjects, comments from teachers, orally and in the books, indicate specific areas for improvement. In weaker areas, such as humanities, levelling is still being embedded and marking is not consistently helpful. Students have been involved in reviewing policies in marking and in the development of student-friendly criteria to help them to judge for themselves their success in a subject. In order to sustain these improvements, a development group of staff has been set up to monitor the impact of assessment.

The college has done much to develop its work in promoting community cohesion. Activities have broadened outside the college community and now involve the local community of Leicester, as well as internationally. The awareness and commitment of staff to broaden students' experiences has been raised considerably through training and awareness-raising events. As a result, students now have a greater understanding of where they have come from and the city in which they live. The college is now working on developing their understanding of the country and the society in which they live. This understanding is exemplified in a comment made by a student following a 'viewpoint day': 'It does not matter who you are, everybody should be treated equally.'

This year, leadership has continued to be strengthened as the college shapes its future path. All faculties are now fully staffed with qualified teachers or are expected

to be in the near future. The appointment of a vice principal has provided additional capacity and strengthened mathematics. There have been new appointments made at head of department level in special educational needs and humanities. Self-evaluation at all levels is rigorous and honest. It is used very effectively to identify where improvements are needed. Tight, structured and focused line management arrangements ensure that the correct actions take place to bring about the required improvements. There is an aspirational and focused plan that sets out a strong vision for the future, with challenging targets which support the raising of standards. There is also a programme that is aimed at enhancing the role and significance of the college both within the local and wider community. As a result, rolls are rising and the current Year 7 is full to capacity.

The college has received some useful support through the National Challenge programme which has provided additional help and resources aimed at improving attainment in English and mathematics. Local authority advisers and external consultants have provided helpful support in coaching members of the middle and senior leadership teams in monitoring and evaluation and in improving aspects of teaching.

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

Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards of attainment by:
 - embedding the use of assessment in the classroom so that the quality of learning and the progress students make in all key stages is at least good
 - developing teaching strategies further so that students of all abilities are sufficiently challenged in all their lessons
 - ensuring that Year 11 students meet National Challenge targets by 2011.
- Develop the school's work in promoting community cohesion by broadening its activities beyond the local community.