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10 June 2011

Mrs E Davies
Headteacher
Hereford Technology School
Westward House
Grimsby
Lincolnshire
DN34 5AH

Dear Mrs Davies,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Hereford Technology School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school together with Tim Bristow, Her Majesty's Inspector, on 9 June 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 students that we met.

Since the previous inspection in January 2010, there have been significant changes in the school. In November 2010, the school moved into its new premises. In February 2011, the school formed a trust with a number of other education providers as trustees. It is now proposed that the school becomes an academy through the Ormiston Trust from August 2011. Appointments have also been made to strengthen the leadership of the school further. A new coordinator of special educational needs has been appointed and a new deputy headteacher and head of mathematics are due to join the school in September 2011.

As a result of the inspection on 27 January 2010, 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The GCSE results of 2010 remained significantly below average in English and mathematics, and measures of progress were significantly below expectations in these subjects. Notwithstanding this, results at GCSE were the best in the school's history, with 81% of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE. However, the proportion of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE including English and mathematics remained below national averages at 36%. The school's internal tracking information shows that this gap is predicted to close and for 2011 attainment is expected to be closer to national averages. Lesson observations and analysis of the school's internal data coupled with results already gained through early examination entry, confirm the school's view that standards and the progress students make has improved further. These improvements are the result

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

of developments in the quality of teaching and learning, systematic tracking of students' progress and earlier targeted support for individual students who look to be underachieving.

Concerted action has been taken to improve attendance and this is reducing the number of persistent absentees and the overall absence rates, particularly at Key Stage 3. The school has identified and eliminated the main causes of low attendance, for example, in limiting the off-site courses to gain greater control of students' attendance. It is developing a positive work ethic and encourages and rewards good attendance. Hard-to-reach students and their families are accessed by the newly appointed home liaison worker who actively encourages students' attendance. There are positive signs that the attendance of targeted groups of students is improving, for example, by creating more appropriate learning pathways for disaffected students.

There has been a substantial reorganisation of support staff structures. Provision for students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved. The progress of this group of students is now being closely monitored in line with the school's new tracking system. The school's internal data show early signs of success although time is still needed for these new arrangements to fully take effect. Initiatives such as dyslexia support, nurture groups and alternative curriculum pathways are keeping these students in education, improving their attendance and strengthening their economic well-being by providing pathways and opportunities beyond Year 11. Students feel safe, secure and happy in their nurture groups, but their progress varies depending upon the subject expertise of the staff. Education plans for these students allow provision to be tailored specifically to their requirements. However, while teachers are aware of these plans, in some lessons they do not pay sufficient attention to them to ensure that work is matched accurately to meet the needs of all students.

The school has taken a number of measures to improve attainment, especially in English and mathematics, but they will take time to have full impact. There are also a number of barriers to improvement which the school is addressing. Staffing shortages have now been remedied and the school has recognised the need to grow and establish its own teachers and leaders, which it does well. Middle leaders show determination to develop provision and outcomes and are equipped to monitor and evaluate the work of their departments. However, their relative inexperience means that they are not fully effective at checking that teaching and learning are having a positive impact on the progress of different groups of students and for different cohorts. The school has had a challenging year dealing with inadequate teaching and staff absences. However, middle leaders have been well supported by the senior team and external partners so that attainment in Year 11 continues to rise. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. This has been achieved through improvements in planning where teachers use their attainment data to plan accurately for progress through a wider range of learning activities that challenge students more. This has enhanced students' enjoyment in lessons and contributes further to their improving attendance and engagement in learning. However, inspection evidence shows that where lessons are no better than satisfactory, teachers are not sufficiently held to account for their work in order to increase the rates of progress of the students they teach.

The headteacher and senior team show determination and drive and share a clear vision of how to take the school forward. The school's improved capacity for sustained improvement is evident through the strengthening of its provision and its awareness of where improvements are still needed. There are accurate, robust and honest evaluations which are used to address and inform these developments and, as a result, the key areas are improving.

The technology specialism has had limited impact across the school as the specialism was placed on probation in 2010. The school has rightly prioritised this as an area for development. A new technology team has been established and there has been further investment in the new technologies. As a result, there has been improvement in attainment across most disciplines in technology.

The school 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. The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust has supported raising standards in technology. Local authority and National Strategies Advisers have provided helpful support in coaching middle and senior leaders in monitoring and evaluation and in improving aspects of teaching. A productive partnership with a local sixth form college has supported further developments in the mathematics department.

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

Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 27 January 2010

- Improve attendance, so that it is securely satisfactory by:
 - developing the quality of teaching and learning further, to encourage greater engagement by students
 - ensuring that the curriculum for those students who are less-able, or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is more personalised so that so that it meets their needs better.
- Improve the achievement of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those students who are of low ability, through:
 - better coordination and management of these aspects of provision
 - tracking the progress of these groups of students in a more systematic way.
- Raise standards further in mathematics and English through:
 - strengthening the management skills of those leading these subjects
 - ensuring that mathematics and English lessons are sufficiently challenging for all students.