

12 July 2011

Mr M Cooper
Headteacher
South Holderness Technology College
Station Road
Preston
Hull
HU12 8UZ

Dear Mr Cooper,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of South Holderness Technology College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your college on 11 July 2011, together with Ariane Roberts and Stephen Wall, additional inspectors, 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 there have been no significant contextual changes in the college.

As a result of the inspection on 4 November 2009, the college was asked to tackle 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 satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The GCSE results of 2010 remained below average in English and mathematics, and measures of progress were significantly below expectations in these subjects and overall. Notwithstanding this, results at GCSE were the best in the college's history, with 81% of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE and the proportion of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE including English and mathematics rose to just above the national average. Inspectors' observations and analysis of the college's internal data coupled with results already gained through early examination entry, confirm the college's view that standards of attainment and the progress students make have improved further. While the improvements in overall achievement are not happening fast enough to be on a trajectory to meet expected levels for 2011, expected performance for 2012 is more favourable. These improvements are the result of developments in the leadership of teaching and learning, refined examination entry arrangements for students, improved tracking of students' progress coupled with the targeted support for individual students who look to be underachieving.

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

During the monitoring inspection, inspectors observed 27 lessons, around one-third of which were good or better. The college has taken a number of measures to improve teaching and learning, but these will take time to have a full impact. The college joined the gaining ground programme; it made the monitoring of teaching and learning more robust and has raised expectations of teachers. In the best lessons, learning activities are planned well so that students of all abilities make progress. In these lessons, students are suitably challenged and engaged in their work. Clear information is also provided about what they need to do to improve through teacher feedback throughout the lesson as well as in the marking. However, these practices are not yet universal. In the satisfactory lessons, planning remains a weakness and despite the provision of more reliable tracking and assessment data, not all teachers use this to take enough account of students' different starting points. This limits progress in these lessons. Advancement has been made in the senior leaders' improved understanding of the components of good teaching and their robustness in eradicating inadequate teaching. Most teachers with inadequate practice have either improved or have left the college. Target setting has also improved and is now based on objective measures that challenge students to achieve their best and the expectation now is that students will achieve their targets. Many do, but some including those of high-ability, do not always reach the levels of which they are capable.

The head of the sixth form evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form accurately. New courses with a greater vocational focus provide a wider choice of options matched more closely to students' needs and abilities. These are proving popular with students and are helping to stimulate their interest and enjoyment. Increased rigour in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning has begun through, for example, the school-wide 'progress and support visits' and through the increasingly effective use of progress tracking that is holding departments more effectively to account for attainment and progress. The quality of teaching remains inconsistent. Good teaching engages and challenges students to enable them to make good progress. However, some teaching fails to challenge students' thinking rigorously enough; this acts as a brake on accelerating their progress faster. Some teaching does not involve students actively enough in their own learning. Students spend too long listening to the teacher rather than contributing and developing their thoughts and ideas independently. Despite the remaining weaknesses there are early signs that the increasing rigour being applied in leading and managing the sixth form are starting to pay dividends in raising attainment and accelerating progress. Inconsistencies between subjects are showing some early signs of narrowing, although at a slow pace.

Having directed the work of the senior leadership team the headteacher has rightly shifted the emphasis to ensure that the middle leadership can be held accountable for its work. Here the outcomes are more variable. While subject variation has reduced, there is still too much variation particularly regarding the attainment of high-ability students in some subjects. Monitoring and evaluation has improved in that departments are aware of their strengths and weaknesses but in many cases this is not used diagnostically or with sufficient drive to make the changes that are necessary within defined timescales.

The college's specialist technology department is being used effectively to raise standards. Its contribution includes the support and promotion of information and communication technology in its feeder primary schools, the establishment of successful vocational courses, for example in science, as well as in the establishment of the 'rural dimension' which has impacted across the college.

The college has made progress in building a stronger capacity for improvement. Since the last inspection leadership roles have been redefined and aligned directly to college improvement priorities. Improvements to the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the college have also been made. The college improvement plan defines clear priorities and the college is working steadily towards meeting its success criteria though the pace in some areas is slow. Consequently, developments have produced positive signs of improving trends in some but not yet all areas of the college's work.

The college has received some useful support through the 'gaining ground' programme which has focused primarily on assessment, middle leader development and the use of tracking data. Local authority consultants have also provided helpful support in coaching teachers and improving monitoring and evaluation in targeted subjects.

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

Mr Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place 04 Nov 2009

- Improve the quality of teaching by; ensuring more consistent use of the assessment information available at the college to plan lessons better and develop activities that engage the interest of students more; ensuring more consistent use of the best practice evident at the college in assessing students' learning needs during lessons, to provide more focused and targeted approaches for students, and appropriately challenging work; providing students with clearer information about what they need to do to succeed.
- Remove the variation in the performance of different subjects by ensuring more consistent use by middle leaders of the best practice evident at the college in monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the work of their teams, particularly the quality of teaching and learning, and in setting appropriately challenging and realistic targets for improvement.
- Improve the progress and attainment of students in the sixth form by focusing more on monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and reducing the variation in the performance of different subjects.