

13 July 2011

Mr J Harris
Headteacher
Glenburn Sports College
Yewdale
Southway
Skelmersdale
Lancashire
WN8 6JB

Dear Mr Harris,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Glenburn Sports College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Stephen Rowland, additional inspector, on 12 July 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, students, chair of the governing body and representative from the local authority, who provided a clear insight into the life of the school.

The school has undergone considerable change recently. The previous headteacher left in August 2010 and an associate headteacher was appointed who led the school on an interim basis. A new substantive headteacher took up post in April 2011. The school entered an Education Trust in September 2010 and a new governing body was constituted. The number of students on roll has dropped from 686 at the time of the previous inspection to 602 and this has resulted in a staffing restructure.

As a result of the inspection on 9 and 10 December 2009, the school 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 school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The proportion of students achieving five good grades at GCSE or equivalent, including English and mathematics, rose to 38% in 2010. This figure is significantly below the national average but represents strong improvement for the school. The proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades rose to 71%, similar to the national figure. Students' average point scores have improved overall, as have their average point scores in English and mathematics. Results at GCSE in 2010 indicated that students made better progress from their relative starting points than had previously been the case, although the proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics continued to be

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

significantly lower than that in English. The school's increasingly reliable data indicate that attainment and progress are set to rise further in 2011. Staff work very hard to support students who are identified to be at risk of underachieving. Targeted intervention, combined with consistently better teaching, is securing improved outcomes.

Observations of learning in lessons confirm that the majority of students is making better progress. The best teaching captivates students' interest and provides varied opportunities for them to develop their thinking. Teachers promote the development of students' literacy skills through a sustained focus on appropriate vocabulary and by encouraging technical accuracy. Lessons regularly support numeracy development, for example, in geography, science, music and physical education. However, not all teachers routinely use information about students' specific literacy and numeracy skills in planning lessons. The school is aware of this inconsistency and has developed plans to improve practice. Students value the enhanced guidance provided to them by teachers, both in dialogue and through marking, and increasingly act upon this in improving their work.

The vast majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school site. They are good-humoured, respectful and keen to work. Nonetheless, a few students are disruptive on occasions. The implementation of a more rigorous behaviour management policy has resulted in a recent increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions and as yet it is too early to judge the impact of these sanctions on the subsequent conduct of individuals. The school has plans for the introduction of on-site provision that is intended to reduce significantly the need for exclusions. Students report that behaviour has improved over the last year and that the school's 'behaviour for learning' system motivates them to manage their own behaviour well. Reinvigoration of the prefect system, including through high-quality training for prefects, provides additional strength in ensuring the school's positive learning climate. The school's sport specialism continues to make a major contribution to students' personal development and achievement. Students value their work as sports leaders and demonstrate excellent team-working skills in a variety of contexts.

Departmental self-review has been sharpened through a coaching programme whereby senior leaders have given developmental feedback to heads of department. This has been a productive learning process resulting in an enhanced capacity among middle leaders to identify strengths and weaknesses, and plan clearly for improvement. Although practice is improving, there is still some variability in the impact of middle leaders on raising achievement.

The local authority is responsive to the school's needs and continues to provide effective, timely and proportionate support. Local authority consultants have helped to improve teaching in the core subjects. The school adviser works in partnership with the school to complement and enhance self-evaluation, including through coaching of senior staff. Crucially, the local authority brokered the appointment of the associate headteacher whose strong leadership brought renewed direction to the school. Close working between the associate headteacher and recently-appointed substantive headteacher has ensured smooth transition and stability which is recognised and appreciated by staff and students. The new

headteacher has established himself rapidly and built strong relationships within and beyond the school, for example, by strengthening partnership and transition arrangements with local primary schools.

The new governing body holds the school to account in a rigorous and supportive way. The Education Trust provides a wealth of developmental opportunities, including the partnership between the school and the local further education college. Insightful self-evaluation, clear vision, purposeful leadership and high morale within the school community mean that the school has good capacity to secure rapid improvement.

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

Mrs Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 9 and 10 December 2009

- Raise attainment and achievement of all students, and in particular boys and higher ability girls by:
 - focusing on strategies to help more students move from grade D to grade C, particularly in GCSE mathematics
 - ensuring that teachers make more effective use of information on students' literacy and numeracy skills to support individual students' learning and progress in all lessons
 - ensuring that marking consistently provides students with the detailed information and guidance that helps them to complete and improve their work.
- Reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions by continuing to improve behaviour, particularly amongst the very small minority of disaffected boys.
- Build on best practice already in the school, and improve the consistency of quality and rigour of self-evaluation at subject level.