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Mr Piers Tolson
Headteacher
Wellfield Business & Enterprise College
Yewlands Drive
Leyland
Lancashire
PR25 2TP

Dear Mr Tolson

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wellfield Business & Enterprise College

Following my visit with Mary Lanovy-Taylor, additional inspector, and Jean Olsson-Law Her Majesty's Inspector to the college on 12 and 13 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the college's previous monitoring inspection.

My visit was the third monitoring inspection since the college became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The college is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed subject to prior agreement with me.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2012

- Ensure that the proportion of students leaving with five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics at least meets or exceeds the national average by:
 - creating a rigorous and robust monitoring system which raises teachers' expectations of all students' capabilities and ensures that targets provide sufficient levels of challenge regardless of students' abilities, backgrounds or starting points
 - enabling all staff to use assessment information precisely to match work to meet individual students' needs
 - increasing opportunities for well-planned, independent learning in lessons and devising clear assessment procedures so that accurate and more frequent assessment is used to accelerate students' progress
 - ensuring that the curriculum meets students' needs more effectively and supports them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Improve behaviour and prevent bullying by:
 - creating a clear and effective set of procedures for managing behaviour and ensuring that they are understood by all staff and students
 - consistently and fairly applying the college's procedures for managing behaviour and preventing bullying
 - encouraging all students to develop a positive approach to the learning opportunities that teachers provide
 - increasing supervision around the college site at break and lunchtimes.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - strengthening the accountability of middle leaders for securing good or better teaching in their areas, ensuring that there are rigorous procedures to monitor, evaluate and review the quality of provision and its impact on progress
 - creating robust processes for self-evaluation involving a range of stakeholders
 - developing a succinct college development plan with specific, measurable and time-bound targets to help drive improvement quickly and securely
 - using performance management effectively to support improvements in teaching and learning in order to raise achievement.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 June 2013

Evidence

During this monitoring inspection my colleagues and I studied the college's work. We observed 20 part-lessons, taught by 20 teachers. Two of these observations were made, jointly, with two members of the senior leadership team. We examined the college's self-evaluation and development plan, the college's current progress data for students and records of students' behaviour. We also scrutinised the minutes of the meetings of the standards and effectiveness committee and the local authority's most up-to-date evaluation of the college's work. We took the opportunity to assess the quality of teachers' marking in a sample of students' books. We held meetings with senior leaders, teachers with subject responsibility for English, mathematics, science, modern languages and humanities. We also met with a group of teachers, two groups of students, the Chair of Governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection four members of staff have joined the college. These include a teacher who has taken responsibility for the new faculty of art and technology, a teacher of art and photography, a teacher of technology and a special educational needs coordinator. Other appointments have also been made to the staff of the college so that from September 2013 all teaching positions will be held by colleagues on permanent contracts. The college's plans to become a sponsored academy on the 1 September 2013 have been put on hold and the earliest date the college could become an academy is 1 January 2014.

Achievement of students at the college

The quality of teaching continues to improve and, as a consequence, students' achievement has been sustained since the previous monitoring inspection. The college's current tracking data indicate an improvement in the proportion of students, in Year 11, who are currently on track to achieve five A* to C grades including English and mathematics at GCSE. Currently, 53% of students are attaining at this level, which is a 22% improvement on the results for 2012 and close to the college's target of 57%. This year's early entry GCSE mathematics results indicate that the proportion of students who have already gained an A* to C grade in this subject is appreciably higher than it was in 2012. The college's data also indicate an improving picture of attainment in English. However, the improvements in English and mathematics are largely due to the improved performance of the boys rather than the girls. The progress the students are making in English and mathematics, similarly, is showing an improving picture. The college's data are indicating that, currently, the proportion of students making expected progress in both subjects is considerably higher than it was last year putting it broadly in line with the national average for 2012. However, while the data for mathematics include public examination results, the reliability of the college's data for English is less secure as it has not had the same degree of external validation.

The proportion of students on track to gain one high grade GCSE in science, in 2013 is currently 92% which is 40% higher than last year. However, the number of students on course to achieve two A* to C grades in science, at 39%, remains below average. This is largely due to the current science curriculum limiting the number of science qualifications that students can take.

At Key Stage 4 the gaps in performance between the various groups of students in college including boys and girls, students entitled to free school meals and their peers and those students who require extra help with their learning and their peers have continued to narrow.

Since the previous monitoring inspection the senior leaders have set up a more robust system for monitoring the achievement of students in all their subjects at Key Stage 3. Students are set challenging targets and their progress against these targets is regularly monitored by their teachers. Students who are found to be underperforming are quickly identified and then given extra help to enable them to get back on track. This system has been in place for a relatively short time and it is too early to assess its impact on students' performance. In addition, the reliability of some of the data collected has not been independently verified.

The quality of teaching

Senior leaders' focus on improving the quality of teaching, as described in the previous report, has continued. The senior leader responsible for developing teaching is unrelenting in her drive and determination to improve teaching across the college. This and the provision of appropriate training to help teachers develop their practice are contributing to their improved performance in the classroom. Consequently, the quality of teaching has continued to get better and teaching in many lessons is now at least good with examples of outstanding practice. As a result, students' progress in these lessons is never less than good. There are strengths in mathematics, food technology, drama, information technology, Spanish and physical education. However, as you and your colleagues are aware, in a small minority of lessons teaching still requires improvement to bring it up to the standard of the best and provide a further boost to students' achievement.

Students make the most progress in those lessons where teachers' expectations of them are high and where students are clear about what they are learning and why. Compared to the previous monitoring inspection it is evident that more teachers are now using skilful questioning to probe students' understanding and make them think. An increasing proportion of lessons are now at least good because more teachers are taking into account the different ways that students learn and planning a range of activities that engage and motivate them. Since my last visit the training that teachers have undertaken to promote group work and develop students' independence has been effective in enabling students to work cooperatively during lessons, help each other understand difficult ideas and take greater responsibility for their own learning.

Although teaching is now better than it was at the last monitoring inspection, where teaching still requires improvement the concerns identified at that visit still apply. Students' progress is not quick enough when they are all given the same activity to do and not enough account is taken of the needs of the most and least able in teachers' planning. Consequently, the more-able students are not suitably challenged and weaker students find the work too difficult. In some cases this leads to students straying off task and disrupting the learning of others. There are also examples where teachers talk for an inappropriate length of time and, as a result, students' concentration wanes and their learning slows.

As at the previous monitoring inspection the quality of marking still remains inconsistent across the college. In the best examples marking is regular, detailed and teachers give clear advice to students about how their work could be improved. In addition, this advice is followed up by the student, contributing to their good progress. Practice such as this was evident in some English books. However, there are still examples of books that have not been marked for some time. There are also examples of marking that is unhelpful, making

little contribution to students' learning. There was evidence of weak marking in some of the science books scrutinised by inspectors.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour both in lessons and around the college is consistently good, as it was at the time of the previous monitoring inspection. Students enjoy coming to college and most students have positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in the college's above average attendance and the below average number of students who are persistently absent. The senior member of staff responsible for this aspect of the college's work provides strong and effective leadership. She ensures that data relating to students' behaviour are carefully logged and regularly analysed. This ensures that students whose behaviour or attendance falls below expectations are given effective support to enable them to take advantage of the opportunities provided for them. As at the previous monitoring inspection incidents of poor behaviour including bullying and disruptive behaviour have continued to fall as a result of the consistent application of the college's behaviour policy by all staff. However, when asked students do say that disruptive behaviour has not been eradicated altogether and in a few lessons, particularly when the teaching is uninspiring, a small minority can disrupt the learning of others.

The high level of staff supervision at changes of lesson, break and lunchtimes, noted at the previous two monitoring inspections, has now become embedded. This is contributing to an orderly, calm and safe environment for students.

The quality of leadership in and management of the college

You and your colleagues have continued to address the areas for improvement identified at the college's previous full inspection. Senior leaders are clear about their areas of responsibility and are increasingly holding their colleagues to account for the quality of their work. One mechanism they use for doing this is through weekly meetings with those heads of department they manage. As a consequence, the quality of teaching, the achievement of students and their behaviour continues to improve.

The role of subject leaders in monitoring the work of their departments has developed since the previous monitoring inspection. For example, they routinely observe their colleagues teach and where they identify underperformance introduce appropriate support to help them improve. This includes pairing teachers who require development with a colleague to act as a coach. As a result, the quality of teaching and the achievement of students are continuing to improve. Sharing of good practice both within departments and between them is now becoming established. For example, the head of mathematics has modelled aspects of effective practice for her colleagues in the department. This has led to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement in mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 4.

Subject leaders' responsibility for checking how well students are progressing is a key aspect of their role. They have received effective training in how to analyse students' achievement data and use this analysis to identify which students are performing well and those who require additional help to get them back on track. This analysis is also used by leaders and managers to hold individual teachers to account for the standards achieved by students in their classes.

The college improvement plan addresses all the areas for development identified at the previous full Ofsted inspection. In addition, it is informed by the college's analysis of how well it is doing. Staff responsibilities within the plan are clear as are the arrangements for

monitoring the progress being made against each of the targets in it. However, the success criteria in the plan could be sharper. There are examples where success is measured in terms of an action being completed rather than measuring the impact that action has on students' outcomes. Alongside the college improvement plan is the local authority's statement of action, which also addresses the key issues identified at the inspection. There is a great deal of overlap between the two plans and, as a consequence, some unnecessary duplication.

The new arrangements for performance management are now in place. The meetings to enable line managers to check the progress that their colleagues are making towards achieving their performance objectives, which had not taken place at the time of the previous monitoring inspection have now been held. As a result, managers have been able to check the progress individual members of staff are making against each of their targets and hold them to account.

The governors on the standards and effectiveness committee have a good understanding of the progress that the college is making towards each of the targets for improvement. They continue to hold regular meetings in order to monitor the progress the college is making; holding leaders and managers to account for the achievement of the students.

External support

The local authority is providing less intensive support to the college as its officers recognise the increased capacity of the college's senior leaders to manage improvements effectively. However, the college is still benefiting from the assistance of four external consultants who are helping improve the professional practice of identified teachers and supporting the recently appointed subject leaders in literacy, mathematics, modern languages and science to carry out their management responsibilities successfully.