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28 June 2013

Mr Alan Doust
Headteacher
The Community College, Bishop's Castle
Brampton Road
Bishops Castle
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Dear Mr Doust

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Community College, Bishop's Castle

Following my visit to your school on 27 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the college since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the college was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other leaders including the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body. I also spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority. Each of these discussions focused on the action taken since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher and I also made short visits to six classrooms.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the college since the last inspection.

Main findings

Your records show that students' achievement is improving and that GCSE results in English and mathematics are set to exceed those of 2012. Leaders know how well students and groups of students are making progress in each year group. The

college has very recently purchased a computer programme to help present this information in a clearer way to support all staff in developing a better understanding of students' rates of progress.

Since the inspection, additional lessons have been added for students in Year 9 and Year 10 who are struggling with English and mathematics skills because of weaker teaching in the past. Senior and subject leaders have identified that students' good use of English skills across all subjects need to be improved and the college has agreed to take part in an Ofsted project to support this.

The checks you and your senior staff are making on the quality of teaching are showing that there are improvements but that some teaching continues to require improvement. Recent training has helped teachers with ways in which they can plan lessons that focus clearly on what all students need to learn. College leaders are checking if this is making a difference and are working with teachers to provide additional support where weaknesses remain.

In the short time I spent in each lesson, students had opportunities to work together and there were some examples of teachers using carefully chosen questions to extend students' thinking. There were examples of good quality written feedback to students but it was clear from the books that I looked at that not all teachers are doing this well or regularly.

The college improvement plan focuses on the key areas of improving teaching and strengthening leadership. The actions identified to make these improvements are clear and relevant with regular opportunities built in for leaders, including governors, to check that the actions are making a difference. The plan does not, however, include the specific detail of the targets college leaders have already set for students' and groups of students' achievement. A recent training session for the college's faculty leaders helped them with writing their own improvement plans and identifying how the work of the teachers in their teams will make a difference to the whole college's priorities.

Changes are being made to the ways in which teachers' performance is managed so that there can be more regular checks which can then identify which teachers are underperforming and might need more help. The college is also extending an existing programme where teachers can learn from each other and be given advice about how to improve specific aspects of their teaching.

Governors have a good understanding of what the college needs to do to become 'good' and have effective systems and structures in place to hold college leaders to account.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Leaders should take further action to:

- include the specific detail of the targets related to students' and groups of students' achievement in the college improvement plan.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority continues to identify the college as 'medium priority' and so provides additional support, including from an improvement adviser. An advisory teacher is providing well-received support in mathematics. Leaders have visited other schools to help develop the improvements they are making to the college.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Shropshire and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector