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27 November 2013

Gavin Ball
Principal
Frome Community College
Bath Road
Frome
BA11 2HQ

Dear Mr Ball

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Frome Community College

Following my visit to your college on 26 and 27 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you, your staff and students made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the college's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in October 2012. 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 the serious weaknesses designation. Based on the progress the college has made, I recommend that the next inspection should be a full section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching, so that it is at least good, by:
 - ensuring all teachers check students' progress during lessons and adapt their teaching if needed so that each student makes as much progress as possible and that no time is wasted
 - making sure that all teachers inform students how to improve their work through written feedback.
- Raise achievement for students overall, and especially for boys, by developing students' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects.
- Make sure that students, and boys in particular, behave consistently well in all lessons through teaching that engages, challenges and interests them. Share the good practice that exists in the college and in the partner school.
- Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning by developing the skills of all leaders and managers in:
 - checking the quality of teaching
 - coaching teachers about how to improve
 - taking action with teachers where the progress their students make is not good enough.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 November 2013

Evidence

The inspector met with the Principal, all other senior leaders and a range of middle leaders, groups of students, and the Chair and one other member of the Governing Body. In these meetings, we discussed the actions the college has taken and the impact on improving the quality of teaching and students' achievement, and reviewed progress and other information. The inspector also undertook 18 lesson observations with a range of senior and middle leaders; in each case, the feedback to the teacher was also observed by the inspector.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, there have been a number of key staff changes, including middle leadership.

There has been no change in the college's status and no progress has been made on the college becoming an academy; it continues to be a local authority-maintained school.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

- The Principal provides the college with outstanding leadership that underpins the rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- The Principal is supported well by all other senior leaders who form a strong team with a broad range of complementary skills.
- Key middle leaders have been identified or appointed who provide additional skills and expertise and strengthen this team still further.
- The governing body provides the support and challenge required to ensure that the Principal and other senior leaders have focused, and continue to focus, relentlessly on securing the improvements required.
- All of the actions noted at the time of the previous monitoring visit have had a significant impact on raising students' achievement through improvements in teaching and well-targeted support and intervention.
- The college has moved rapidly on a broad range of fronts to secure improvement. In some cases, for example in particular subject areas and in the sixth form, this has meant 'rebuilding from the ground up'. This is testament to the quality of the leadership; the swiftness and clarity in identifying what needed to be done; and the effectiveness of the actions taken.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement

- The extremely rigorous monitoring of all students' progress enables swift and effective interventions to be made, both to support the student and to deal with any weaknesses in teaching where necessary. This monitoring also clearly

identifies any gaps in achievement between groups of students and enables effective action to be taken. As a result, students' achievement has improved significantly and current information shows that it continues to improve.

- Similarly, the monitoring of the quality of teaching is extremely rigorous. The inspector agreed with the evaluations of the progress made by students and the quality of teaching in all of the lessons observed. The feedback to teachers was precise and identified the 'next steps' for the teacher clearly.
- There is good evidence that in all areas where the college established policies and expected practices to improve teaching, very strong progress has been made, although some inconsistencies still remain. Within this 'framework' there is flexibility to enable teachers to be creative and innovative – this is valued highly. Teaching is now mostly consistently good, and some is outstanding.
- Students' behaviour is at least good and almost all show extremely positive attitudes to their work, even when the teaching is not as good as it could be. Some excellent examples of peer teaching were observed during the visit, some managed by the teacher but, on other occasions, initiated by the students themselves.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement

- There are no significant weaknesses in the college's approach. The Principal and senior leaders are fully aware that there is still some inconsistency in the quality of teaching and provide well-directed support for individual teachers and for some subject areas. They are also aware that students in the sixth form require more guidance on the non-qualification activity that would support them better in preparing for their next steps.

External support

The college continues to use support from a range of other schools targeted on key areas for improvement, including specific subject areas. These links have been a key part of the improvements the college has made. The Principal, supported well by other senior staff, has secured highly effective working partnerships with all other schools, first and middle, in Frome to have much sharper procedures for tracking and improving pupils' and students' progress across the full age range, as well as focusing on improving, for example, students' literacy skills. The college continues to build and develop excellent relationships with the wider community and with employers, businesses and other organisations in Frome to place the college at the centre of the community and to ensure that students have a rich and varied set of experiences and opportunities. Despite the college not gaining academy status, support from the local authority continues to be limited.