

PROTECT-INSPECTION

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Stephen Ellison
Headteacher
Cottenham Village College
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Dear Mr Ellison

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cottenham Village College

Following my visit to your college on 5 December 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 September 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- ensure that members of the governing body are fully confident in using information on students' progress to challenge senior leaders
- evaluate the progress made against the college action plan and the impact of these actions
- ensure that teachers' planning meets the needs of all groups of students, and the quality of their marking is consistently effective in helping students move up to the next level of attainment.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, ten students from Key Stages 3 and 4, eight members of the Governing Body and an external

consultant to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the college improvement plan. We also visited a number of lessons briefly to look at the quality of teaching and teachers' planning, and the marking of students' work.

Main findings

During our visits to lessons, I observed the majority of students engaged in their learning. My scrutiny of teachers' planning shows that teachers who you judge to require improvement are not planning in sufficient detail to ensure that their teaching meets the needs of all students in the class. The quality of marking is inconsistent and students told me that teachers' marking does not always detail clearly enough how they can improve their work.

Your college action plan meets requirements and covers key areas which aim to drive improvement. However, you have not yet evaluated progress against the plan and the impact of the actions taken thus far.

You have started to increase the proportion of good and better teaching, and encourage discussions about effective practice through your teaching and learning community sessions. You acknowledge the need to improve students' outcomes, particularly in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages, which is reflected through your detailed raising achievement plans for these subjects. You also acknowledge the need to secure consistently strong leadership at middle leadership level.

Recently published information on students' progress shows that girls, middle attaining students and those students entitled to pupil premium funding make less progress than they should. Your own information gathered from recent practice GCSE examinations for students in Year 11 shows that you continue to face challenges in raising standards so that they compare favourably with those nationally.

The governing body clearly wants students to achieve their best, and acknowledges its key role in holding senior leaders to account in order to raise standards further. They have started to monitor more closely subjects which are the cause of concern, and recognise the need to analyse more thoroughly the performance of different groups of students in the college.

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

You have drawn on the support of external consultants to support you in producing a more accurate self-evaluation document, and they have worked productively with

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your heads of faculty, particularly with the heads of English and mathematics. The local authority is providing much-needed support to the governing body to strengthen their understanding of information of students' attainment and progress.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector