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Mr Nicholas Condliffe  
Headteacher  
Denton Community College  
Taylor Lane  
Denton  
Manchester  
M34 3NG

Dear Mr Condliffe

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Denton Community College, Tameside**

Following my visit to your school on 18 December 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 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 school should take further action to:

- ensure that the achievement gap between students supported by the pupil premium funding and their peers is reduced as quickly as possible
- ensure that all staff are challenging the most able students, particularly in Year 7, in order for them to make the best possible progress
- to form an interim strategic group of governors to play a key role in driving forward improvements at a rapid pace across the school.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you and other senior leaders, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and two groups of students. I evaluated the school action plan and scrutinised other key documentation. I also had the opportunity to accompany you on a tour of the school.

## Context

Since the last inspection, you have changed the roles of the directors of English and mathematics, and they no longer have pastoral responsibilities. You have also separated the technology and business studies departments.

## Main findings

The recent inspection report acknowledges that Denton Community College is an improving school and you have used it as a catalyst for a renewed focus on the next stage of this journey. Your action plan focuses closely on the areas for improvement which were highlighted in the inspection report. It gives a detailed account of actions and intended impact, but it is not always clear who is responsible for leading, monitoring and evaluating these specific actions. All middle leaders have produced their own action plan for their faculties, following the same format as the school plan which demonstrates the importance you attach to effective leadership throughout the school.

Leadership is a real strength of the school. The Lead Teacher Development Programme is evidence of the importance you give to building leadership capacity at all levels. You, and all the leaders I met during my visit, demonstrated an eagerness to be challenged in order to improve your effectiveness and secure at least a good judgement at your next inspection.

The leadership of teaching and learning is particularly strong. A coaching culture is embedded across the school and the Improving Teaching Group ensures that all teachers have effective personalised support and training. Members of this group ensure that the excellent classroom practice which exists in school is shared and the impact of their work can be seen in the increase in the amount of teaching which is consistently good or better.

The robust quality assurance cycle which takes place five times a year allows you to track the progress of students against their aspirational targets. Internal and external moderation ensures that the data which teachers input is accurate and can be used effectively to identify which students require extra help. Current predictions indicate that students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics is set to continue on an upward trend over the next two years. However, these predictions also show that the gap between students supported by the pupil premium and their peers is not narrowing. You are aware that this has to become the top priority for everyone in school.

In order to meet the needs of the most able in mathematics, you have created a master class for those students aiming for A\* grades. The setting arrangements in this subject allow students to follow a personalised learning journey which is focused on them making the best possible progress. In English, you have made the decision to move to ability setting in Year 7 from January 2014. The Key Stage 4 students I spoke to during my visit liked how their mathematics teachers challenged them in this subject to achieve higher grades. However, students in Year 7 felt this was not the case in both English and mathematics with one saying, 'we can't push on when others don't get it.'

The current organisation of the governing body is not enabling governors to provide the necessary support and challenge for you and senior leaders in this crucial period of improvement. A range of expertise and skills exists within the governing body but its

committee structure is not focused on the core purpose of raising standards across the school. Following a discussion with the Chair and other members of the governing body, I suggested that creating an interim strategic group, with governors who had the time to commit to this, would be the most effective way for them to play a key part in driving improvements forward at a rapid pace in the coming months.

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 school has a strong relationship with the local authority. The local authority officer linked to the school has a real understanding of its issues and you value his support and challenge. He had already spent time in the school, before the recent inspection working with you to improve the quality of teaching and develop leadership. I have no doubt that this level of involvement will continue over the coming months.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**