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Mr J Kelly
Associate Principal
Risedale Sports and Community College
Hipswell
Catterick Garrison
North Yorkshire
DL9 4BD

Dear Mr Kelly

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Risedale Sports and Community College, Catterick Garrison

Following my visit to your school with Phillip Smith HMI on 13 February 2014, 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 us 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 November 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.

Evidence

During the visit, discussions were held with you and other college leaders, three members of the governing body and a local authority representative. I spoke to students, and examined documents, such as the college's action plan, monitoring records of teaching and the latest progress data. We also observed teaching and learning in the 13 classes in the college.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection two staff have resigned. The college has appointed a head of humanities and lead teachers for English, art and teaching and learning.

Main findings

The college's leaders including governors understand that the college is in a precarious position given the decline in students' attainment and achievement, particularly in English, mathematics, science and humanities. They acknowledge that their impact has not been good enough in driving improvements and that urgent action is necessary to turn things

around. More recently they have taken some effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. To this end, they have developed

an action plan and made adjustments to bolster curriculum provision, performance management and monitoring and evaluation procedures. The initial signs are that these actions are proving effective. Nevertheless, the college is at the wrong end of the getting to good spectrum and it will take a tremendous and sustained effort to turn things around by the time of the next section 5 inspection.

The latest college data indicates that students' attainment will rise in 2014 in terms of the proportion of students gaining five A*-C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, and the proportions of students reaching and exceeding expected levels of progress in English and mathematics. The picture in Key Stage 3 is less clear although the college assert progress is also good here, although inspectors were not provided with any robust data to verify this.

While leaders believe that teaching is mainly good throughout the college progress data in several subjects including the key subjects of English, mathematics and science, over time does not readily support this view. During the inspection, some effective teaching was observed in a range of subjects including English, humanities and mathematics. Teachers were encouraging students to develop their speaking skills and extend the complexity of their vocabulary. There was an emphasis on work that was practically-oriented and this heightened students' engagement as they were more actively involved in their own learning. Some good examples of evaluative marking and feedback were also seen. But, there is too much inconsistency in practice across and within year groups which needs eliminating.

Leaders have taken some decisive action to remove subjects that have not provided good value for money and make compulsory, subjects that students have enjoyed and in which they have achieved relatively well in over time. A renewed focus on literacy development is evident and more time is given to the teaching of English and mathematics in Key Stage 4.

Attendance is improving and persistent absence levels are falling as a result of effective management strategies and the higher profile now given to the importance of good attendance. Similarly, the volume of behaviour incidents and fixed-term exclusions are also dwindling as students show their increasing satisfaction with the curriculum offer and improving teaching.

Time will tell whether the slump in results in 2013 was a blip or the start of something more endemic. In any case, leaders are acutely aware the college must improve, and fast, given that its overall effectiveness has twice been grade 3 and in 2013 it fell below the government's minimum standards for students' attainment and progress. Leaders must also ensure that the improvement strategies that are showing some initial signs of success become embedded and are sustained and those aspects that are lagging recover swiftly.

Performance management is more robust with a higher degree of accountability apparent. Monitoring and evaluation is more regular and more sharply-focused on evidence of impact.

The governing body articulate a strong desire to support the college's improvement and now know that the college has a real fight on its hands to get to good by the time of the next section 5 inspection. Minutes of meetings show that governors are: receiving a raft of

college performance information; seeing for themselves what is happening in classrooms; and using a consultant to help them 'make sense of' and provide objectivity to the information they have. However, governors accept that until recently they have not been as focused or robust as they should have been in interpreting this information and using it to gain a more realistic view of the college's effectiveness. Going forward, governors are acutely aware that they must increase their strategic influence and become more discerning in their support and more demanding in their challenge of the college's leaders to drive improvement in the key priority areas.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. The college should email a termly progress update to the lead inspector.

External support

Over time the local authority actions to assist the college to improve teaching and raise achievement in several subjects had not demonstrated sufficient impact. More recently, actions have begun to exert a more noticeable and positive effect on the college's work. Good local authority support has helped to improve students' behaviour and attendance. Going forward, the local authority must challenge the college more effectively to deliver concrete evidence of any claimed improved outcomes and not be satisfied by anything less.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Corporate Director of the children and young people's service for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector