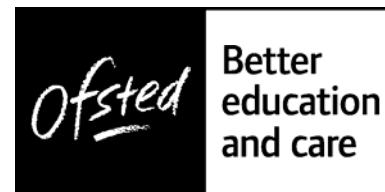


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18 May 2005

Mr D Davies
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Davies

Implementation of Stretford High School Community Language College's Action Plan

Following the visit of Sara Morrissey HMI, Jeremy Richardson HMI and Martin Bradley HMI to your school on 9 and 10 May 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The school has made reasonable progress since the last monitoring inspection and reasonable progress overall since being subject to special measures.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Executive Director (Children and Young People's Service) for Trafford. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRETFORD HIGH SCHOOL COMMUNITY LANGUAGE COLLEGE'S ACTION PLAN

Findings of the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 36 lessons or parts of lessons, five registration sessions and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors, a representative from the LEA, nominated senior and middle managers and members of the school council. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the chair of the governing body and the Executive Director (Children and Young People's Service) for Trafford.

Standards in the national tests and examinations in 2004 were reported in the previous HMI monitoring letter. Standards in lessons varied but were generally below those expected nationally overall.

The quality of teaching was very good in seven lessons, good in 11, satisfactory in 14 and unsatisfactory in four. The quality of teaching seen during this HMI monitoring visit matches closely the view of the school. It was very good in modern foreign languages. Most teachers followed the school's policy on learning and teaching, planning lessons with clear learning objectives and making provision for different groups of pupils. The management of the pupils' behaviour was generally effective, although transitions from one activity to another were not always conducted quickly enough. However, marking remains a weakness. Although some good practice was seen, it was unsatisfactory overall. It was too infrequent, often cursory and rarely provided sufficient guidance to the pupils.

Where the teaching was good or better, the enthusiasm and energy of the teachers was conveyed well and the interest of the pupils was captured through a variety of motivating and challenging activities that were conducted at a brisk pace. A key feature of the best teaching was the very effective use of assessment. Teachers matched tasks accurately to the pupils' different abilities, providing appropriate levels of challenge to the whole class. Success criteria were shared very effectively, often through involving pupils in evaluating each others' work or the work of a fictitious pupil. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory, it was dull and tasks were insufficiently challenging. Expectations were too low and the pace was too slow.

The quality of learning was very good in six lessons, good in 11, satisfactory in 14 and unsatisfactory in five. Where the learning was good or better, the pupils knew how well they were doing and understood clearly what they needed to do to

improve and reach a particular GCSE grade or National Curriculum level. They worked well collaboratively and when not under the direct supervision of an adult. Where the learning was unsatisfactory, the pupils lacked enthusiasm and, many of them were unsure about what they were supposed to learn.

The pupils' behaviour has improved both around the school and in lessons; it was satisfactory or better in nearly 95 per cent of lessons, and in nearly half it was good or better. Most pupils understand and follow classroom protocols and their behaviour towards the staff and to fellow pupils is at least satisfactory and frequently good. They are courteous and recognise that the improved behaviour has improved their learning. Behaviour in the assembly seen was very good. Whilst pupils' attitudes to learning are generally satisfactory and sometimes good, in several lessons, pupils were not appropriately challenged, leading to low-level chatter and inattention.

The school has significantly reduced the number of exclusions and is putting in place protocols and systems to deal with poor behaviour in a variety of appropriate ways, working with several outside agencies to meet pupils' needs. Whilst attendance continues to improve and in the spring term was around 92 per cent, punctuality to school remains a concern.

The acting headteacher was appointed to the permanent post in March 2005 and provides good leadership. He has raised morale, uniting the staff and pupils through a shared commitment to achieving common goals and taken decisive action to tackle identified areas of underperformance, informed by the ongoing programme of monitoring. His presence around the school is acknowledged and appreciated by the pupils. The headteacher is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the senior team whose leadership is satisfactory overall and improving. Senior managers have an accurate picture of the current progress made by the school; they are leading actions to address key issues and reviewing the progress made more systematically as a team. The capacity of the senior leadership and middle management teams is being strengthened further through a targeted programme of continuing professional development and mentoring supported by funding from the Leadership Incentive Grant.

Middle managers have a greater understanding of their roles as leaders and a number have taken responsibility for the development of strategies to support the improvement of whole-school issues. They are beginning to evaluate the impact of actions taken to address key issues and regularly share good practice through subject leader meetings.

The governing body has continued to support the school well, although its role in providing challenge in holding the school to account is not sufficiently well developed. The chair of the governing body has taken steps to further strengthen its capacity through the recruitment of experienced governors and the identification

of governors' specific training needs. Committees are monitoring the progress made by the school on key issues and the governors' welfare panel has been effective in its contribution to improving behaviour. Support from the LEA remains valued; targeted consultant support is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching.

The school is contemplating a change to its specialism when re-designation of its specialist school status comes under review and has entered discussions with the DfES regarding this possibility. The quality of teaching of modern foreign languages has been inconsistent, but has now improved significantly and there are plans for good practice established within the department to be shared. The school has continued to build on successfully established links with primary schools and Saturday morning provision of adult language classes for the local community.

Action taken to address the key issues

Key Issue 1: improve standards and raise pupils' achievement throughout the school

The school uses externally produced data about the pupils' prior attainment to set targets and monitor the pupils' progress each half term. Information from this analysis is used increasingly effectively to identify groups of the pupils at risk of not reaching their targets and to direct resources accordingly. Displays around the school include annotated examples of the pupils' work, explaining why it has been awarded a particular grade or level. National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades are described in language the pupils can understand on posters in many subject areas and the school has developed a range of activities to help the pupils assess their own learning. A draft policy on marking has been produced and a recent scrutiny of the pupils' work has identified areas of good practice. However, the school recognises that the policy contains weaknesses and is not implemented consistently.

Progress on this key issue is reasonable.

Key Issue 2: improve leadership and management and governance

The clear direction and focus on learning and teaching provided by the headteacher and senior team have generated a team approach shared by staff throughout the school. Middle managers are more accountable in their role as leaders and staff understand their responsibilities in supporting whole school improvement. The Governing Body is developing its skills to hold the school fully to account.

Progress on this key issue is reasonable.

Key Issues 3: improve pupils' attitudes, behaviour, attendance and their punctuality to lessons;

The pupils' behaviour and their attitudes have been reported above. The recently formed welfare panel has significantly increased the governors' involvement in issues relating to pupils' behaviour and proved effective in addressing individual cases of serious concern. Punctuality remains a concern for a minority of pupils. The school has sought to establish a range of protocols and procedures to address this issue, but progress on their implementation remains limited.

Progress on this key issue is reasonable.

Key issue 4 to improve the pupils' understanding of teachers' right to teach and other pupils' right to learn

A positive climate for learning in the school has been established through the consistent implementation of agreed procedures to support good behaviour and attitudes to learning. Many teachers have created bright and informative classroom environments which promote learning and celebrate pupils' achievements. The pupils have responded favourably to the school's raised expectations and talk about their school positively.

Progress on this key issue is good.

Key Issue 5: improve the quality of teaching and learning

The school monitors regularly and rigorously, the performance of the teachers and pupils and has a reliable picture of the quality of teaching and learning. Support is directed towards areas of weakness in the teaching and this is balanced with an appropriate degree of challenge. The policy on learning and teaching includes clear expectations that have contributed to improvements. The quality of teaching is reported above and has improved since the last monitoring inspection.

Progress on this key issue is reasonable.

Key issue 6: eliminate the budget deficit as soon as is practicable

Finances continue to be managed effectively; costed plans for current and future spending are closely linked to school priorities.

Progress on this key issue is reasonable.

Key Issue 7: ensure that the pupils experience a daily act of collective worship, receive their full information and communication technology (ICT) entitlement and that their ICT skills are adequate in other subjects in the curriculum

The use of tutorial time remains undeveloped and pupils do not experience a daily act of collective worship. Training has been arranged to develop teachers' ICT skills further, in order to better deliver the requirements of ICT across the curriculum.

Progress on this key issue is reasonable overall: it is sound in respect of ICT but remains limited with regard to the daily act of collective worship.

Key Issue 8: ensure that the school prospectus and annual report to parents contain all that they are obliged

This key issue had been fully addressed at the time of the first monitoring inspection.