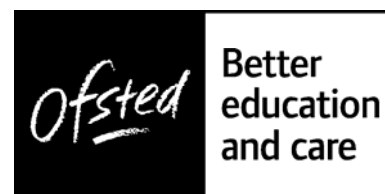


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Post-visit letter – special measures visits

17 November 2005

Mrs J Tiller
Headteacher
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Bradford
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Dear Mrs Tiller

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF IMMANUEL CofE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Introduction

Following my visit with Tom Grievson HMI, Elisabeth Linley HMI, Jon Lövgreen AI, Henry Moreton AI and Mark Wilson AI to your college on 15 and 16 November 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 2004.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

During the visit 61 parts of lessons, nine registration sessions and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, the senior leadership team, some middle managers, the two chaplains, other nominated staff and representatives from the collaborative board and Education Bradford. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in May 2005, the college has appointed a new permanent headteacher and deputy headteacher. They started in September 2005.

The college has realigned some of the responsibilities of the senior leadership team. Eight teachers left the college at the end of the summer term.

Achievement and standards

Provisional results for 2005 suggest that standards at the end of Year 9, while still below average, have improved in mathematics and science but declined a little in English. The college was closer to achieving its targets than in the past. There is a similar picture of improvement in Key Stage 4 where provisional results for 2005 are higher than for the previous year. Nevertheless, standards remain too low and the college did not meet some of its targets. The college's own analysis of its performance indicates that although many of the pupils underachieved, they performed well in some subjects, including aspects of design and technology, fine art and geography.

The pupils made adequate or better progress in 53 lessons, including 28 where it was good or better. Many had a clear understanding of what they were expected to learn. However, weaknesses in basic literacy skills were a barrier for many of the pupils and few have developed appropriate learning skills, including the ability to listen with concentration for extended periods of time. Many of the pupils were too dependent on their teachers and struggled to work independently.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2004:

- Raise attainment – satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

Under the strong leadership of the deputy headteacher, the behaviour strategy is being implemented consistently. Consequently relationships between students and teachers have improved; fewer lessons being interrupted by poor behaviour. The pupils identified as exhibiting poor behaviour last term have benefited from specific help and support, though the full effect of this strategy has yet to be felt.

The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils were satisfactory or better in 54 of the 61 lessons; they were good or better in 26. There has been a positive change in the climate of the school, most pupils behave well and take an increasing sense of pride in their work. In some of the inadequate lessons a small minority of the pupils lacked the appropriate attitudes to learning, were easily distracted and so failed to make the intended progress. Staff presence in corridors usually ensured the pupils moved around the school in an orderly manner. However, in unsupervised areas a small minority of pupils continue to demonstrate inappropriate behaviour.

The number of fixed term exclusions so far this school year is higher than that last year. This is a direct result of a crack down on abusive language, especially that directed at staff. Since September 2005 three students have been permanently excluded for very serious offences. The full potential of the learning support unit to reintegrate students and help reduce the need for exclusions is not yet being seen. This however is currently being addressed by the school.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in April 2005:

- To improve the pupils' behaviour – good progress.

The college is rightly concerned about the lack of progress it has made in improving attendance and punctuality and is reviewing its strategies accordingly. It knows that there needs to be a more consistent approach to tackling lateness to lessons and that information about attendance and punctuality is not always used effectively. The school continues to follow up unauthorised absence and run attendance improvement groups, though again the full impact has yet to be felt. Attendance for the first half of this term was broadly similar to that in the previous year. At 88.6 %, attendance on the first day of this inspection was higher than during the last inspection, but is still much lower than the national average. At 83 %, attendance in lessons was lower than the reported rate. Attendance so far this term is reported as 88.7 %, slightly higher than at the last inspection visit, but is still short of the college's target for the end of the year. Years 7 and 8 are the only year groups with attendance over 90 %, a slight improvement to that seen at the last inspection.

Although punctuality to lessons is still generally satisfactory, punctuality to the college has not improved.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in April 2005:

- to improve the pupils' punctuality to college and lessons and continue to improve their attendance – inadequate progress.

Quality of provision

The new headteacher has provided a sharp focus on improving teaching and learning. Under the leadership of the acting deputy headteacher, the college has made good progress. A range of appropriate training has focused on areas of weakness. The school has revised its template for planning lessons. Teachers routinely use this template to produce clearer learning objectives and structured lessons.

The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 54 of the 61 lessons, including 31 lessons where it is good or better. These figures closely align with the school's own and represent a significant improvement from the previous monitoring inspection.

Where lessons were taught well, objectives were clear. Challenging activities were matched accurately to the needs and interests of the pupils and this sustained their commitment and enjoyment. The pace in these lessons was brisk. Relationships between staff and pupils were strong and based upon mutual respect. This is now a general feature of much of the good teaching across the school. The effective use of probing questions to further extended pupils' thinking was a characteristic of outstanding lessons. Pupils engaged readily and their learning thrived in a positive, productive climate.

In many of the satisfactory lessons, there were only limited opportunities for pupils to work together. Too often marking was descriptive, celebrating achievement but taking too little account of learning objectives. It did not often provide pupils with

information about how to improve. Teachers did not provide a range of activities matched closely to the pupils' different abilities. This adversely affected the progress which some pupils made. In particular, planning and provision for the pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities does not provide a sharp enough focus or an appropriate range of tasks.

Where the teaching was inadequate, including in a lesson taught by a senior manager, teachers were unable to establish acceptable pupil behaviour. They lacked the confidence and skills to manage the pupils effectively. Relationships were brittle and in some cases confrontational. Lessons were dull and uninspiring and too little was expected from the pupils. Consequently, pupils in these lessons made little progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2004:

- improve teaching and learning – good progress

The curriculum is inadequate in the main college. It is satisfactory in the sixth form as a result of effective links with other institutions. The main college curriculum is broad but it does not meet the needs of all pupils. The range of opportunities for external accreditation is narrow and the number of vocational courses is limited. Provision for work related learning in the different subjects is unsatisfactory, though careers education and guidance is satisfactory. The use of the 25 minutes at the start of the school day is not always effective. There have been some recent improvements in the curriculum. The more vulnerable younger pupils receive more focussed support. Year 9 pupils benefit from an Enterprise week. Some subjects offer early entry GCSE for the more able pupils. The range of activities to enrich the curriculum is good. All pupils have access to personal, social and health education, and citizenship. Leadership and management of the curriculum are satisfactory. The leaders of the college have a clear understanding of where the weaknesses are but have yet to remedy all of them. They have sound plans for improvement. Crucially, a rigorous review is imminent following which the school intends to set out a coherent 'curriculum map' for pupils of all abilities. This will identify the different 'pathways' into Key Stage 4, and on into the sixth form.

Arrangements for assessing the pupils' progress are satisfactory. Leadership and management are good, with a clear agenda for change. The strategic plan clearly sets out priorities for the next few years. Much progress has been made this term. The use of data has improved. Teachers have a better idea of how the pupils are doing in relation to their past performance. Target setting is more realistic and this reflects higher expectations of the pupils. Concerns about the progress made by the pupils of average ability are now highlighted. Good progress has been made since the last monitoring visit. Assessment is no longer 'poor' and marking no longer 'unsatisfactory', though too many inconsistencies still exist within and across subject departments. Outstanding practice does take place. For example, in one English class pupils marked each other's work using the national curriculum and assessment criteria; they gave a grade alongside a written comment. This is exemplary, but it was rare.

The provision for the pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is inadequate. Too many pupils are designated because of behavioural issues, and some are automatically placed in bottom sets whatever their potential. This causes more problems than it resolves. There have been improvements in organisation and administration so that pupils and their needs are known and noted, and withdrawal from lessons is now better organised. However the impact on how teachers provide for the needs of these pupils in lessons is limited. Objectives in too many individual education plans are vague and targets often lack precision. During lessons, teachers placed too much reliance on the help given by the attached learning support assistants. Management of the area is well meaning, but lacks clarity and confidence. Monitoring, analysis and strategies for improving the progress made by LDD pupils are uncertain and, at present, the pupils are socially settled but often underachieving. Learning mentors make a good contribution to improving the pupils' attitudes and confidence.

The attachment of chaplains to the college strengthens the focus on the Christian faith. They have a vision for how to develop the spiritual ethos of the college whilst retaining a healthy realism and approachability. Their presence encourages pupils to consider their own beliefs, and to respect those of others. Increasing liaison with teachers and other support staff is enabling chaplains to be more widely and effectively involved in the pupils' progress as both learners and young people.

Leadership and management

The collaborative board has streamlined its structures and improved its effectiveness. There are appropriate plans for increasing the part played by governors and reports to the collaborative board are shared with the governing body. Regular reports from the school's senior managers are discussed and the collaborative board has a good understanding of the progress of the college.

The new headteacher has brought a fresh sense of optimism and a determination to succeed. She provides very good leadership through a calm, confident and decisive way of working with staff and pupils alike. In a short time, she has raised morale and secured the loyalty of the teachers and the pupils. She has built well on previous gains. She provides a good role model and sets appropriately high expectations, particularly for the middle managers. She is well supported by the deputy headteachers, who share her vision and have played a key role in leading improvements. This senior team has overseen considerable improvements in the climate of the college and has made good progress in raising aspirations and enhancing self-esteem throughout the college.

The assistant headteachers have an emerging understanding of their roles but much remains to be done to improve the rigour of line management arrangements. Middle managers, as a result of higher expectations, coupled with appropriate support and guidance, play an increasingly effective role in leading developments. They have a much better understanding of their responsibilities and many have acquired the skills

to fulfil them well. They have recently conducted reviews of their departments. They have used these to identify accurately strengths and areas for improvement.

The school has a clear and accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. Development planning is sharply focused on raising achievement through improving the quality of teaching. It has made a positive impact, particularly on improving the behaviour of the pupils.

A review of line management has improved arrangements. Senior staff meet middle managers regularly and use a common agenda. The outcomes of these meetings are discussed routinely at meetings of the senior leadership team. This is a positive development. There has been a good range of support and training, including on the use of assessment information for middle managers. The newly appointed deputy headteacher has played a pivotal role in developing systems for monitoring the progress of the pupils and setting them targets.

Parts of the accommodation are in a poor state. In some of the boys' toilets, ceiling tiles are missing and there is no paper, soap or towels. The headteacher has appropriate plans for improving parts of the building, including the student reception area. The school is in discussions with the local authority (LA) about plans to reduce its budget deficit of around £250,000.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2004:

- improve management at all levels – good progress

External support

Education Bradford has a fairly clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have responded positively to the school's needs when approached for support. The school particularly values the work of consultants who have made a positive impact on the quality of teaching in the mathematics and English departments. The work of the executive headteacher is greatly valued. He has played a key role in the transition of leadership to the substantive headteacher. Education Bradford has sensibly decided to provide heightened support for attendance and for improving provision for the pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve provision for the pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Improve the curriculum
- Further develop the role of the assistant headteachers

- Continue to improve assessment and its impact in classrooms

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Education for Education Bradford and the Diocese of Bradford.

Yours sincerely

J Richardson HMI
H M Inspector