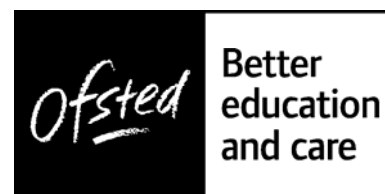


Suite 22 West Lincs
Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 01695 566930
F 01695 729320

Ofsted helpline
01695 566930



Mrs K Leaver
Headteacher
Jeff Joseph Sale Moor Technology College
13 December 2005

Dear Mrs Leaver

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF JEFF JOSEPH SALE MOOR TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Introduction

Following my visit with three additional inspectors to your school on 30 November and 1 December, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2005.

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

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the senior staff, a group of pupils, the vice-chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Achievement and standards

The proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 or higher in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2005 rose sharply in English and more modestly in mathematics and science; in English, the figure was above the national average for the previous year. Unvalidated figures suggest that pupils made good progress overall between the ages of 11 and 14, especially in English, although approximately one-tenth of pupils made no measured progress in mathematics.

In 2005 there was also a sharp improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more higher GCSE or equivalent grades, from 34% to 57%.

This is slightly above the national average, although the proportion gaining five overall passes was below the national figure. Much of the improvement is due to the new applied science course which is equivalent to four higher GCSE grades. However, there has been no improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining five higher grades that include English and mathematics; this was very low at 19%. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is far too low, with only one-fifth attaining grade C or above. This was also the case in 2004, when 10% of pupils did not gain any grade in mathematics. Results in the GCSE science courses were poor. 60% of pupils who took the applied science course passed but 20% of pupils did not gain any grade in science. This was a small improvement on the figure for 2004. Pupils made good progress in English, but progress was inadequate in mathematics. Progress was also too low in another eight subjects, including some related to the college's specialist status; the headline figure for five higher grade passes therefore masks continuing concerns over performance.

Personal development and well-being

Progress on the behaviour of pupils, both inside and outside the classroom, and their attendance, has been satisfactory overall. Pupils' personal development, including their behaviour, was seen to be good in almost half of the lessons and at least satisfactory in nearly nine-tenths. The improvement in behaviour has been good. The school has introduced a new system of rewards and sanctions. Pupils value the decisive action that has been taken; they feel that those who misbehave will be identified and they know what to expect. However, the picture is not consistent. There is still poor behaviour in some lessons, particularly when the teacher has ineffective classroom management skills, and there is some inconsiderate behaviour outside lessons. Attendance has not yet improved adequately and punctuality is inconsistent, particularly for registration. The number of fixed term exclusions has dropped, helped by the school's systems for managing challenging pupils within the school. Improved behaviour has established a position where it is now possible to provide greater challenge and stimulus to pupils. However, this is not happening in all areas of the school and therefore pupils' attitudes to their learning remain too variable.

There has been good progress in rebuilding pupils' trust in staff and their willingness to report incidents of bullying. Systems to control bullying are felt by pupils to be more effective than they were and they express confidence about the manner in which teachers deal with any problems that are reported to them. Many younger pupils feel that the system where Year 10 pupils volunteer to help them if they feel threatened, works well. Even so, a minority of pupils report that some bullying does still take place.

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

- Improve the behaviour of students, both in and out of lessons, and their attendance – satisfactory progress;

- Rebuild the trust that students have in staff, so they will report incidents of bullying - good progress.

Quality of provision

A programme of lesson observations by senior staff and heads of department has been established. Through this, teachers needing particular support have been identified and steps have been taken to help them to improve their practice. Training sessions, on topics such as lesson planning, have also been available to other teachers, and staff from two other schools together with local authority consultants continue to support teachers in several subjects. There are, however, discrepancies in the school's evaluations of teaching and those of the local authority, with those of the school being more positive. The school recognises the need to provide more training to enable staff to make accurate judgements and for developments to be closely monitored.

The quality of teaching and learning remains inadequate overall. Just under four-fifths is satisfactory or better, including two-fifths that is good or better. This is a very similar position to that reported following the inspection of May 2005. Consequently, progress has been inadequate. However, improvements have been made. For instance, teachers mostly manage pupils' behaviour more effectively and follow the school's procedures. As a result, fewer lessons are interrupted by outbursts of challenging behaviour and the extreme behaviour reported previously is much less evident. Inadequate lessons were seen in a smaller number of subjects – still predominately science and mathematics. In mathematics, the most significant weaknesses relate to some teachers' ineffective classroom management. In science, pupils do not always learn as much as they should, owing to teachers' low expectations and a lack of rigorous planning.

There are a number of highly skilled teachers, in subjects such as English, who have the potential to provide excellent role models for others. However, there is too much variation in the quality of teaching and learning at subject level and between teachers within most subjects. Within lessons, approaches to a whole range of elements are inconsistent. For example, marking ranges from exemplary to cursory, and relevant homework is set regularly by some teachers but seldom by others. Although a common format for lesson planning is in place, the detail varies considerably. In particular, although more assessment information is now gathered, teachers do not all make effective use of this in order to match work accurately to the learning needs of various groups of pupils within each class. Plans do not always indicate clearly what pupils are intended to learn. Teachers very seldom provide opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning, or make effective use of it themselves despite some good facilities.

Learning supervisors take the place of teachers who are absent, helping to reduce the adverse impact on pupils' learning. The school now identifies

pupils who are more vulnerable than others, and they are supported by learning mentors. When bullying is reported, firm action is taken and the necessary child protection procedures are in place.

The school has acted to provide better provision for the foundation subjects such as art and music which were identified as concerns at the last inspection. Enrichment days have boosted the provision for music and ICT. There has been some revision of design technology so that food technology is now included in Year 8. However, the school's approach to implementing the National Strategy is inadequate, especially in Key Stage 3, and therefore the curriculum for pupils aged 11 to 14 is much less effective than it should be. Provision for the development of basic skills in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is a weakness; the capacity for further improvement now depends on recently appointed middle managers, who have not yet had time to have an impact across the school. There have been improvements in the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties which have helped to reduce the problem of discontinuity in learning noted in the last inspection.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, science, design and technology, history, music and religious education – inadequate progress;
- Ensure that students receive sufficient lessons in art and design, citizenship and music – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The school's leadership team is receiving support from the LA's chief secondary adviser and a senior teacher who is seconded to the school for a part of each week. The headteacher has a clear understanding of the college's situation and her evaluation of its current position is generally accurate. Governors feel better informed about the school's progress. The leadership team has addressed the concerns about pupils' behaviour vigorously and effectively. Concerns about staff absence are also being addressed and there has been some improvement in the management of staff absence, helped by the employment of learning supervisors. Steps have also been taken to improve the quality of teaching, but these have had too little impact so far. The leadership of the senior team is not consistently effective in its impact across the school, nor has enough use been made of some high quality middle leaders; standards of professional practice, such as the planning of lessons, are too varied and insufficiently aspirational. The college's judgement of the proportions of inadequate or good teaching is more generous than those of the local authority or the inspection teams. Some middle leadership is inadequate. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress or have a realistic understanding of their own attainment.

The college has a growing range of performance data. It is making progress in developing data that will allow it to compare pupils' progress in different subjects; once this is established, the college will be in a stronger position to identify areas of strength and weakness, especially in years 7 to 9. However the use of assessment information to plan teaching and to provide challenge for all learners remains far too variable and is too often inadequate.

A detailed and clearly structured development plan has been produced in response to the inspection. Many helpful actions are indicated although success criteria do not always plainly state the standards to which the school aspires. The leadership on each issue is clear and there is good practice in the identification of a link governor in each area of concern. However, responsibility for monitoring and evaluation is not always clear and often assumes that this will be covered by various processes. The school has conducted a review of its progress. This contains some useful information.

The college holds specialist status in technology. Some very high quality teaching of ICT was observed during the inspection, but the use of ICT across the curriculum is generally poor. Standards and progress in design technology, office technology and science are too low.

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

- Improve leadership and management, especially in the areas of data analysis, the curriculum and support for teachers – satisfactory progress.

External support

The local authority has produced a clearly structured statement of action which includes a wide range of support for the school from its officers. Many of the planned actions are well-chosen and appropriate, with a considerable proportion scheduled in the first full term after the inspection. Success criteria are included but the standard to be attained is not always clearly indicated. For example, there are no indications of expectations regarding improved behaviour, although standards have been set for the level of exclusions. The inclusion of stepped success criteria at the head of each key issue would have been useful, for example regarding improvements in teaching, and a closer link between improved teaching and pupils' more rapid progress would have been helpful. Attention given to the management of staff absence is too limited given the authority's stated early concerns about this and the additional burden that it is placing on the college's leadership, in addition to the management of persistently inadequate teaching. Clearer strategies need to be indicated for the monitoring and evaluation of the additional support to the school's leadership team and the governing body.

The recent review of the school's progress by the authority was detailed and evaluative; it has helped to provide an agenda for the college's next steps.

The adviser provides appropriate challenge to the headteacher. A number of consultants have been supporting the school; this is proving helpful in several areas but more effective arrangements need to be made in mathematics and more urgent action taken in science.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures– satisfactory

Quality of LA's statement of action -satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement:

- address the areas of inadequate teaching, particularly by improving the quality of planning, the use that teachers make of assessment information and classroom management;
- work towards a clearer whole-college understanding of the characteristics of good teaching and learning;
- review the college's approach to the National Strategy, especially in regards to literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum;
- improve attendance and punctuality.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Trafford.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Gray

H M Inspector of Schools