



Mr B Jordan  
Bebington High Sports College  
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Bebington  
Wirral  
CH63 2PS

24 October 2005

Dear Mr Jordan

## **MONITORING INSPECTION OF BEBINGTON HIGH SPORTS COLLEGE'S INADEQUATE SIXTH FORM**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with John Mitcheson HMI to your school on 20 and 21 October 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the sixth form was judged to be inadequate in October 2004.

This letter will be published 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**

Inspectors observed the sixth form's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher, the director of sixth form, a group of sixth form students, a governor, representatives from the Local Authority (LA) and the Local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with students.

### **Context**

The sixth form has increased in size since the last visit. There are 62 students in Year 12, the majority of whom are studying advanced-level courses. Of the 27 students in Year 12 last year, 17 have stayed on into Year 13. Continuing collaborative arrangements with Wirral Metropolitan College enable some students to study law and psychology A levels at the college.

## **Achievement and standards**

Nine students sat advanced level examinations in 2005. The provisional results were significantly stronger than the previous year's, but remain well below national averages. The students' average points score was 150, a rise of 12 points. Most students achieved their target minimum grades. The pass rate improved to 95 per cent but few students attained the highest grades. The results represent satisfactory achievement when students' GCSE performance in 2003 is taken into account. The school had carried out limited analysis of the results.

The picture was significantly weaker at AS level, where preliminary analysis gives the pass rate in 2005 to be only 67 per cent, the same as in 2004. In part, this was a consequence of the inappropriate guidance given to students about post-16 options; some did not complete their courses. The results have affected the proportion continuing into Year 13 which, at 63 per cent, is nevertheless better than last year. Seven students who underachieved are being closely monitored this term. The school has identified that poor attendance adversely affects the students' achievement and is monitoring it more closely. However, it has yet to give adequate attention to developing the students' basic skills and ability to learn independently. Staffing constraints are impeding the development of specific provision for all students in these areas. At present, the contribution made through subjects is inconsistent and has not been audited by the school.

Work on assessment is an identified priority for the next half term. The newly appointed deputy headteacher is clear about the breadth and depth of development required. A start has been made on the use of assessment to promote students' learning and a group is working on a marking policy. Students have target grades for each subject, but many are not clear about the standard of their work or exactly what they need to do to achieve a particular grade. Some teachers share assessment criteria with the students in a meaningful way, but these are rarely displayed in classrooms. There are few examples of students' work, especially annotated work that illustrates particular standards to which students might aspire; the governors' minutes note that this is not seen as a priority for the school. Teachers' marking varies in its usefulness; the best provides good guidance on how to improve. Some students' files showed little evidence of marked work; in some cases this is because it has not been done or submitted. Grades awarded for homework have inconsistent meanings. A currency or language of standards is not shared across the school. The role of assessment in order to raise standards remains underdeveloped; the monitoring of students' progress is in the early stages.

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

**Area 1: raise standards at the ends of Years 12 and 13 by improving academic targets, setting and monitoring** – inadequate progress

## **Personal development and well-being**

The students spoke positively about being in the sixth form. They were polite and considerate to staff and each other, and especially so to inspectors. In lessons, the students' behaviour was very good; they collaborated well when working in pairs or small groups. Many lacked confidence and were reticent about answering questions or offering ideas. While they were positive about learning, the quality and organisation of their work in some subjects reflected their undeveloped study skills and weaknesses in literacy and numeracy. Teachers were inconsistent in the ways they support students' development of independent learning skills. The recently introduced supervised study sessions are not well attended, particularly by boys.

The relationships between staff and sixth form students are a strength of the school. Students commented positively on the approachability of staff and their willingness to listen to students' concerns; they feel safe and well cared for. The two hours of physical education and sport each week helps the students to lead healthy lifestyles. An increasing number of students select healthy options at lunchtimes; vending machines have been removed from school. The sixth-form council provides students with an opportunity to express their views. Few students, however, engage in extra-curricular activities and community links are underdeveloped. Consequently the potential of such activities for raising students' self-esteem and enriching their educational experience is not realised.

## **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching has improved. About half of the teaching was good and almost all was at least satisfactory. The school is more aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, although monitoring does not focus sufficiently on learning. The teachers have been encouraged to use a range of ways to make lessons interesting. Starter activities prepare the students for learning, and introductions are generally clear and well pitched. Although satisfactory overall, some lesson planning did not take account of the needs of all students by supporting the less able and challenging the higher achievers. Concluding plenary sessions require further development.

In the best lessons, teachers made learning active and enjoyable. They explained what was to be learnt and, at the end of the lesson, checked that this had been achieved. They expected the students to think for themselves and to work hard in pairs or groups. Questioning was used well to generate discussion and encourage students to share ideas. Occasionally, students evaluated their own work, and that of others, and were able to describe what they need to do to improve.

Students' progress was good in only a quarter of the lessons. There were several reasons why students did not make better progress, including the low expectations of some teachers of what students might achieve. Where students had weak recall of previous learning, the pace of lessons was slowed. Some lacked skills in interpreting data and using technical language. Although aware of their targets,

students had not been given enough information on how to improve their performance.

Little progress has been made on promoting independent learning. Many students were reliant on their teachers' support and were passive in lessons. Their files were disorganised and work was sometimes incomplete. This does not equip them for independent study or provide a source for revision.

Satisfactory progress has been made in improving the curriculum. New BTEC courses in sport, business studies and health and social care have relevance to the workplace. However, there remains scope for enhancing vocational provision further and for providing clear pathways for students aged 14-19. A newly introduced foundation year provides a route to advanced courses for those who did not attain five higher grade passes at GCSE.

One hour a week is dedicated to religious education (RE), personal, health, social and citizenship education (PHSCE) and key skills and careers education. This arrangement is inadequate. There is not enough time, provision is piecemeal and lacks coordination, and not all students receive their full curricular entitlement. Although study skills are introduced during induction sessions and on focused activity days, limited guidance is given in lessons on the best ways to learn and recall information for examinations. The development of key skills is given insufficient emphasis. The students' lack of basic skills in written and oral communication and in interpreting data is an impediment to their progress. Some support is provided for lower-attaining students in Year 12 and additional help is available for selected students in Year 13. Access to information and communication technology (ICT) has improved; the students appreciate the dedicated ICT suites and library facilities.

Students who joined the sixth form in 2005 were provided with appropriate and impartial advice and guidance on post-16 options at the school, on employment and on provision offered by other local schools and colleges. Students and their parents were encouraged to consider new vocational options but uptake remains lower than for traditional courses. Careers advice and guidance on further study has improved; the students value highly the work of the Connexions adviser. Systems to monitor students' progress are in the early stages of implementation.

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

**Area 2: improve the quality of teaching** – satisfactory progress

Satisfactory progress overall on **Area 3:**

- **modify the curriculum so it meets the needs of all students;**
- **improve the students' basic skills, such as ICT, and the capacity for independent study;**
- **improve advice and guidance to prospective sixth-form students so that they are directed to appropriate courses in which they are likely to succeed, whether the courses are at school or elsewhere.**

## Leadership and management

The senior leadership team currently comprises the headteacher, a newly appointed deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers and the business manager. A deputy headteacher post remains vacant due to the school's serious financial position. The headteacher has acted decisively to reduce the projected overspend and a recovery plan to manage the deficit budget has been agreed with the LA. However, the reduced size of the senior leadership team is putting strain on the pace of development in some areas. An additional factor is that the identified areas for improvement in the sixth form echo key development points in the rest of the school, so there is much to do. Nevertheless, staff have worked well together, particularly on improving teaching. The inclusion of the sixth form as an agenda item for meetings of curriculum co-ordinators and departments is a first step in raising its profile at middle-management level.

The school's evaluation of progress is largely descriptive but gives a fair account of what has been done since the last monitoring inspection. While some initiatives are in the early stages, the impact of others could be gauged and progress checked against the success criteria in the action plan. A sharper analysis is required: this would also aid the work of governors.

The director of sixth form has a new job description that sets out clearly defined responsibilities and identifies key tasks. He has set up a number of appropriate systems to monitor aspects of sixth-form provision; some require refinement. The monitoring of attendance in lessons has improved, although a minority of staff have not complied with the expectation that all absences are reported. Students have been given target grades and the first review of their progress is due to be carried out shortly. Senior staff, LA inspectors and an educational consultant have carried out lesson observations. These reflect an improved profile of teaching. Less attention, however, has been given to the progress made by students; the school's lesson observation form concentrates on what the teacher does rather than what the students learn as a result. A few other observation records identify significant weaknesses that are not then reflected in the grades awarded; for example, "insufficient challenge, slow pace" does not accord with satisfactory teaching and learning. A stronger focus on learning is an important next step.

Governance has improved. A group of governors meets on a monthly basis to review progress on the sixth form action plan. Minutes reflect an increased robustness in holding the school to account; for instance, governors are right to check that guidance on entry to sixth form courses has been adhered to. The planned liaison with head of sixth form and governors of a local school is a welcome development.

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

**Area 4: improve leadership and management of the sixth form at all levels of management in the school and ensure staff and governors are well aware of what best practice is in a modern sixth form** – progress only just satisfactory

### **External support**

The LA's revised statement of action is satisfactory; it addresses the points raised at the monitoring inspection last May. The new target date, September 2006, for the recovery of the sixth form reflects an appropriate degree of urgency.

The LA is meeting its commitment to the sixth form. The 14-19 curriculum manager, whose role is funded by the LSC, has provided effective support for the director of sixth form, particularly in developing management systems. Subject inspectors have carried out lesson observations. The LA has provided training on a number of relevant fronts and more is planned. An education consultant, whose role is funded through the leadership incentive grant, continues to provide support in improving teaching. His report on leadership and management is useful.

### **Main Judgements**

Limited progress has been made since the sixth form was identified as inadequate.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, progress has been just satisfactory overall.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- improve the use of assessment in the teachers' day-to-day work;
- refine and implement a common system to track students' progress;
- devise a coherent programme for PHSCE, key skills, RE and form time;
- make better use of the outcomes of monitoring and data analysis to evaluate progress and plan or refine the next steps.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the LSC, and the Director of Education and Cultural Services for Wirral.

Yours sincerely

**Jane Jones**  
**H M Inspector**