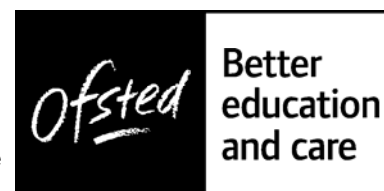


Prospects Learning Services Ltd  
132-138 High Street  
Bromley  
Kent  
BR1 1EZ

T 020 8313 7760  
F 020 8464 3393

Ofsted helpline  
08456 404045



28 November 2005

Mr Tim Smith  
The Magna Carta School  
Thorpe Road  
Staines  
Middlesex  
TW18 3HJ

Dear Mr Smith

## **SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE MAGNA CARTA SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Nina Bee, Olsen Davis and Alison Thomson, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 10 and 11 November 2005, 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 was found to have serious weaknesses in March 2005.

This letter will be published 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, senior managers, a group of middle managers, and groups of students.

### **Context**

The acting headteacher has become the school's substantive headteacher. The school has been reorganised on a house basis, and its management has been restructured to place more emphasis on pastoral support.

### **Achievement and standards**

The school's results in the Key Stage 3 national tests in 2005 fell below those of 2004. The proportions of students gaining level 5 or above in English, mathematics and science were 79 per cent, 81 per cent and 73 per cent respectively. The school was disappointed particularly by the results in science. Girls achieved more highly than boys.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 fell too. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above fell from 56 per cent to 54 per cent, and so the school did not meet its target of 60 per cent. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grade G or above fell from 98 per cent to 93 per cent. Girls achieved more highly than boys, but less so than in previous years. Figures are not yet available to put these results into a national context.

The school has introduced strategies to address underachievement in the foundation subjects at Key Stage 3 but it is too early to judge the impact of some of these on students' standards and achievement. Subject managers' roles have been strengthened to make monitoring of standards more rigorous and to allow them to play a fuller part in raising standards in their subjects. Schemes of work have been modified to make them more accessible to boys. The quality of teaching and learning has improved.

Assessment data is used to set individual targets, related to national curriculum levels, for students in every subject that they take. This strategy is intended to help students raise their achievement, and also to provide the school with a basis for monitoring its standards in all subjects more effectively. Students have their targets written in their planners. But while there are examples of teachers explaining clearly in class what a particular level means, and what a student has to learn to achieve it, students generally say that they are unclear about this.

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

The personal development and well-being of students are satisfactory overall.

Most students say that they enjoy their education. Attendance is in line with that reported in March 2005 and is satisfactory. Steps are being taken to target students with attendance below 85 per cent but it is too early for the impact of these to be seen. Students, staff and parents welcome the new house system because they feel part of a family and enjoy the inter-house competition. Students regard the merit system as a positive force that motivates good behaviour and effort in class.

The attitude of students to learning and lessons is generally satisfactory, but there is considerable variation. Behaviour is satisfactory overall, and students and staff are very clear that it has improved substantially. For example, the rate of exclusion has fallen since July 2005, and the number of incidents reported in mathematics has halved since September this year. However, in lessons where the teaching is not stimulating, there remains some low level disruption. This is not always well managed by teachers, who do not all apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. There is a new behaviour tracking system which offers an effective tool

for tracking behaviour in subjects, and of individual students. The new inclusion room provides a sanction that the students feel is a powerful deterrent to poor behaviour.

Students and staff commented that the amount of litter around the school has decreased, but there is still too much of it both in the dining room and outside after break and lunch. One student commented, "Perhaps people drop litter because they know that there will always be someone to pick it up."

Students feel safe and secure. They say that there is someone on the staff they can approach if they have a problem. They also value the support of the Year 10 peer mentors and the prefects. The students care for each other. An example of this is that over 100 students applied for 45 posts as prefect.

The students are encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. The food available in the canteen includes new healthy options. Students are allowed to drink water in class, but some drink it excessively, and some teachers allow them to consume fizzy drinks. Students speak well of their involvement in school activities. New activities in the extended curriculum include photography and archery. There are many opportunities for the students to be involved in the wider community, for example through dance, drama and music with senior citizens or disabled people, or in hospitals. The introduction of work-related courses, such as hairdressing, construction and motor vehicle studies has had a major impact in preparing students for their future economic well-being.

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

- Achieve greater consistency in behaviour management – satisfactory progress
- Improve the co-ordination and outcomes of the pastoral system – satisfactory progress

### **Quality of provision**

Of 35 lessons or part lessons observed, mainly in Key Stage 3, 32 were satisfactory or better, 13 were good, and one was outstanding. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 has improved and is now satisfactory. However, it is still below the quality of teaching observed in Key Stage 4 in March 2005.

The best lessons were exciting and engaging, organised to promote learning effectively, well resourced and underpinned by high expectations. There was an ethos of respect for learners and their ideas. Students felt valued and motivated and confident to achieve, to take risks as learners and to share their ideas with each other. Where interactive whiteboards were available, they were used effectively to enhance the learning, for example as a focus for pooling and trying out ideas from the whole class.

The less effective lessons were dull, depended on a limited range of teaching strategies, used time less efficiently, were too easy or too difficult for some students

and were underpinned by low expectations of students' learning and behaviour. Teachers spoke over chatter from students and disruptive behaviour was either tolerated or responded to in a negative manner that proved to be ineffective.

Work in students' books has generally been marked and graded, but there is a lower incidence of formative comment than in many other schools.

The school has increased the frequency and rigour with which it monitors lessons. Observation of lessons is always followed by developmental feedback.

The school has revised its curriculum in several foundation subjects, taking account of the findings of the last inspection. The school day has been reorganised to allow extra-curricular activities, particularly activities in houses, to take place more readily at lunchtime.

Students receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. Good features include the introduction of the house system and the peer mentoring. Students feel that they are safe and that they are well looked after in school. However, assessment for learning is not firmly in place and students do not always have a clear idea about why they had certain target levels and what they need to do to achieve them.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 – satisfactory progress

## **Leadership and management**

The appointment of a substantive headteacher has served to stabilise the school. He has focused firmly on resolving the issues for improvement identified in the school's inspection report, and has reorganised his senior management team effectively for this purpose. Criticism of the management of pastoral support has been addressed primarily through establishing a house system. While there is some inconsistency in the way that the houses are operating at present, senior managers are already monitoring this, with a view to taking action to improve it.

The line management of subjects has improved. Following criticism of the management of one faculty, this has been disbanded, with the heads of subjects that it comprises line managed directly by members of the senior team. Each of the senior managers, including the headteacher, maintains a line management file that is monitored, and commented upon, each week by one of the deputy headteachers. The tracking of individual students' progress is improving. Information and communication technology now has a stable staff and improved resources, and its guidelines for teaching the subject have been reviewed. Issues relating to the staffing and teaching of modern foreign languages have been addressed. The PSHCE programme has been developed, and the first cohort of students will be entered for examinations next year.

Feedback from parents and students on the changes in leadership and management is positive. Students are enthusiastic about improvements in behaviour, and how the new house system makes registration times calmer, 'because the whole group are working together.' Many spoke of enjoying taking part in inter-house sports.

The school's action plan is clear and succinct and sets out what needs to be done and who will lead each development. Its organisation shows a clear sense of priority and urgency, and reflects the common sense of purpose and high expectations with which the school plans to secure its improvement. The approaches to evaluating progress are rigorous.

The school has addressed the health and safety issues raised in the March 2005 inspection. The school has increased the number of venues used for assemblies. Their frequency has increased, and steps have been taken to enhance their quality. The two assemblies seen during the monitoring visit were of high quality.

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

- Improve the effectiveness of management in the monitoring of outcomes - good progress
- Meet all statutory requirements for health and safety in relation to work experience and the provision of daily acts of collective worship – satisfactory progress

### **External support**

The school reports that it is supported effectively as a technology college. The local authority has increased the support available to the school, and has responded to the school's request for proportionately more support in its weaker foundation subjects. The impact of some support can be seen in the improved classroom practice of some teachers.

The local authority's statement of action is satisfactory.

### **Main Judgements**

The school has made satisfactory progress in removing the causes of its serious weaknesses. This visit has raised some concerns about the standard of education provided and the school's performance will be monitored.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

The areas for improvement raised in March 2005 all remain priorities. In addition, the school needs to:

- Increase the attainment of students in Key Stage 4.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Executive Director for Children and Young People, Surrey.

Yours sincerely

Dr Janet Mills  
Additional Inspector