



7 March 2006

Mrs K Leaver
Headteacher
Jeff Joseph Sale Moor Technology College
Norris Road
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Dear Mrs Leaver

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

Introduction

Following my visit with Ken Shooter HMI and Ross Parker, John Ashton, John Lovgreen and Steven Wall, additional inspectors, to your college on 2 and 3 March 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

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

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Evidence

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

Achievement and standards

Standards at Key Stage 3 were below average in the 2005 national tests. In English they were in line with the national average although they were well below this standard in mathematics and science. Students' progress between

the ages of 11 and 14 was in line with the national average, but this was the result of good progress in English, with below average progress in mathematics and science. This was an overall improvement on the figures for 2004 due largely to a sharp improvement in English. The more able students made better progress in English and mathematics than they did in science.

In Key Stage 4, the proportion of students gaining five or more higher grade GCSE or equivalent passes rose sharply in 2005 and was slightly above the national figure, having been well below national standards in the previous four years. However, the proportion of students gaining five higher passes including English and mathematics did not improve and remained well below the national figure. Attainment in English and mathematics was well below national standards. Standards in GCSE science were very low and students did significantly worse in science than in their other subjects. However students' access to vocational courses such as applied science has helped to increase the proportion who are experiencing examination success, but there remain key areas of the curriculum where standards have not improved. These vocational courses have also influenced students' progress between the ages of 11 and 16 which was above average overall, including in English, but very low in mathematics. The progress made by girls was much better than other girls nationally, but the progress made by boys was in line with the national picture. A number of boys, together with a few girls, made exceptionally low progress. The more able students made much better progress in English and science than they did in mathematics.

Students' progress in lessons observed during the inspection was satisfactory or better in just over three quarters and good in two fifths. Current progress is still too low to redress the low standards. Factors which inhibit students' progress include poor behaviour but more commonly their limited understanding of what they can contribute to their own learning. Teachers' planning too often is directed at one outcome for a whole class with the result that some students find the work too easy, especially in mixed-ability classes. The needs of students with learning difficulties are rarely planned for effectively.

Personal development and well-being

The college has made satisfactory progress in improving the behaviour of students but much remains to be done. Behaviour around the college is generally acceptable outside lessons but instances of inconsiderate behaviour such as pushing at doors and bad language are frequent. The staggered lunchtimes make for a noisy and disruptive environment for teachers and students in lessons at the time. Behaviour in lessons depends largely on the

quality of teaching. Where it is good or better, students do not have the time or inclination to misbehave; where it is weaker, students' lack of interest and engagement means behaviour deteriorates rapidly. The college's new system of rewards and sanctions is signalling the ground rules students are expected to follow but they question how effective it is because they feel teachers are not consistent in applying it. The number of students being excluded has dropped considerably and the number of students placed in detention, although high, is declining. The college has yet to develop a coherent approach for the hardcore of students who persistently re-offend.

Too many students arrive late for lessons and the number of students moving around the site without apparent reason during lesson times is high. Punctuality to college in the morning is still a cause of concern. A random check during the inspection showed well over 100 students arriving late. Difficulty with the buses accounted for some of this, but the few staff at the gates to check on latecomers did not clearly signal the college's concern or disapproval.

Attendance is improving slowly as a consequence of the more rigorous monitoring and intervention strategies introduced by the college but still remains below the national average overall.

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 - satisfactory progress

Quality of provision

The college has worked hard to develop a wider understanding of what constitutes a good lesson. An extensive programme of lesson observations has extended the understanding of the factors that promote effective learning far more widely. A programme of coaching is intended to encourage teachers to become more openly evaluative about their practice. Staff training has highlighted effective behaviour management and the variety of teaching approaches that make lessons engaging.

One result of this programme has been an increase in the proportion of good teaching. Of the 48 lessons seen 42% were good or better. However the

21% of lessons where teaching was inadequate has remained similar to that seen in the last monitoring visit, so the gap between students' best and worst experiences in lessons is widening.

In the best lessons behaviour problems are avoided because students enjoy the work. Tasks are appropriately challenging. Expectations are very clear, and relationships are based on mutual respect. Students expect to learn effectively, and are confident that their work will be carefully marked so that they get clear guidance on how they can improve. A clear emphasis on the criteria that distinguish one grade from the next pervades planning, lesson activities and assessment. Some teachers are still not using data sufficiently to ensure that tasks are well adapted to individual students' needs. As a result, too many lessons are weak in both pace and challenge. Even in the better lessons questioning does not consistently challenge the higher attainers, or check that they are working at an appropriate level.

In lessons where students do not learn effectively disruptive behaviour is a frequent weakness. In other lessons teachers use considerable skill to absorb, deflect or defuse similar problems. Weaknesses in basic behaviour management slow the pace of learning. The ethos for behaviour in the college is too fragile for less skilled teachers to manage.

Teachers are making better use of assessment data to track students' progress in relation to the grades they ought to achieve, but day-to-day marking remains inconsistent. Older students suggest that as much of 40% of marking is of no help to them. There are examples of high quality marking, particularly in English, where strengths are clearly identified and development areas are clearly pointed out.

The organisation of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 now ensures that students get enough time for an adequate study of art and design, and music. This has been done without harming some opportunities for option courses in Year 9, so the Key Stage 3 curriculum is now satisfactory. The three pathways at Key Stage 4 enable various balances of GCSE and vocational courses to be chosen. This, and the fact that the range of work-related courses is significant and expanding, means that the needs of students in Years 10 and 11 are well catered for. The college curriculum in its entirety is appropriate to its specialist status. Remaining weaknesses include citizenship, which is inadequately mapped, and the daily act of worship, where use of form time for those not in assembly is highly inconsistent. The management and

coordination of numeracy across the curriculum are slow to develop and inadequate. The college judgement that numeracy is being adequately covered is at odds with a recent review, teachers' views, and evidence from lesson planning. In contrast there is clear progress in developing information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum, and the priority being given to literacy is beginning to bear fruit. It is not yet clear how the college intends to evaluate the progress and impact of these important initiatives.

The staggered lunchtime arrangement reduces the effectiveness of too many lessons because of disturbance to lessons from those not being taught. Lateness between lessons further reduces curriculum time. Enrichment activities are good in terms of academic support classes, and opportunities in such areas as art, music, sport and computing to develop skills. The number and range of extracurricular activities is satisfactory. Some imaginative initiatives such as STEM (science, technology, e-learning and maths) and other themed days provide interesting alternatives to standard lessons.

The college is working hard to manage students' behaviour, reduce bullying and to establish a climate in which students can report when they have been bullied. Evidence from interviews and questionnaires points to a decrease in serious incidents, but also to the continuation of lower level bullying. Students are increasingly able to share their concerns, especially with older students trained as peer mentors. On the other hand, students spoke of not finding their reception at student services as helpful as they would wish it to be.

Under the workforce agreement, the college is beginning to replace its heads of year with pastoral managers, which should free up more teaching time for the teachers presently carrying out this role and allow a more flexible and concentrated approach to pastoral care and guidance.

The college is doing a lot of good work supporting those individual students who have a statement of special educational need, using its designated resource funding from the LA. However, there are large numbers of other students, including many with behavioural needs, who would benefit from more support in class.

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

Leadership and management

The college's ability to draw together key pieces of data as indicators of its performance is helping to improve its capacity for self-evaluation. As the college says, systems for rigorous self-evaluation are still at an early stage and not embedded throughout the college. A new quality assurance strategy is being developed which is intended to enhance middle leadership and line management structures; this is wise, because establishing consistently good practice is one of the greatest challenges the college faces. A data manager has been appointed and a review of the assessment system has been launched. Regular assessments are being introduced which offer the potential to track and analyse performance across subjects and over time. At present, college leaders cannot form an evaluation of students' progress over recent months but they will soon have the opportunity to do this. However, the implications of this in terms of lesson planning, the discussion of different outcomes for different learners, and marking have not been fully explored so far. Subject leaders and line managers do not set high enough expectations in these respects. Judgements are not always accurate or rigorous enough, with the result that the real impact of some recent initiatives has been overestimated. Too few key leaders are well informed about national standards of good practice. The college keeps appropriate records that feed into evaluation exercises like the headteacher's report to governors, but has less secure evidence on the extent of homework and the improvement of students' attitudes.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the college's improvement. The college leadership has been enhanced by three additional members who have joined it on a temporary basis with specific briefs. These provide additional support to the existing senior team of seven in supporting teaching practice and enhancing leadership skills among key middle managers. The headteacher has rightly identified support for teaching and subject leadership as key areas. However, current strategies are not securing a rapid enough

improvement in the quality of teaching or consistency in the application of sound policies. The overall impact of senior and middle leaders is inadequate.

Strategic leadership and management of the technology college programme have been and continue to be inadequate. Specialist subjects have not been properly supported or given direction for many years. Key staff have not been sufficiently involved in purposeful strategic planning, progress reviews or quality assurance measures. There is evidence of significant under-investment in all three specialist subjects. As a result, resources have been depleted, damaged equipment has been taken out of use permanently, and subjects have struggled to keep pace with curriculum change. This has had a detrimental affect on teachers' morale and restricted students' access to important learning resources.

The college has used over £250,000 over three years on ICT staffing but made insufficient investment in new courses such as engineering or GNVQ science. Some benefits may have percolated through to specialist subjects indirectly but this is an inappropriate use of the preferential grant and is not clearly linked to targets in the four year plan. The headteacher has begun to address the deficiency by providing specialist subjects with some pump-priming to address shortfalls.

The work of the governing body is improving and there are good links with key departments. Governors are involved in self-assessment procedures. There is emerging good practice in the departmental reports to governors although these do not yet include a commentary on the quality of teaching or students' progress outside of national tests or examinations. Minutes show an appropriate focus on evidence and that governors provide appropriate challenge for the college leadership.

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

Members of the LA's staff have been active in providing support and challenge for the college. A useful analysis of the LA's support plan was provided, indicating some aspects for further development but lacking a clear

judgement of the impact of the work in some areas. The report identified appropriate weaknesses such as inconsistent behaviour management and continuing pressures in mathematics and science. However its structure is based around the personnel and so chances to evaluate strategic impact, for example in leadership or whole college issues, are sometimes lost.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – *satisfactory*

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – *satisfactory*

Priorities for further improvement

- ensure that leaders and managers at all levels are effective in establishing consistent good practice throughout the college
- 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
- continue to 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