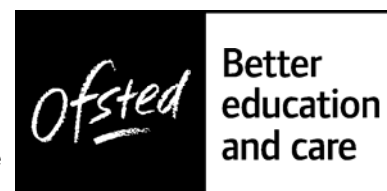


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8 March 2006

Mr Keith Holt
The Headteacher
Bethnal Green Technology College
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Dear Mr Holt

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BETHNAL GREEN TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Introduction

Following my visit with Andrew Olive HMI, Andrew Marfleet AI and Nina Bee AI to your school on 22 and 23 February 2006, 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 October 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 the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, the chair of governors, senior and middle leaders and representatives from the local authority (LA).

Context

At the conclusion of the inspection in October 2005 the headteacher resigned with immediate effect. Prior to this, the local authority and governors had been concerned about the running and performance of the school and were taking action. The deputy head was in charge of the school for two weeks until the local authority appointed an experienced acting headteacher. The

school has recently advertised for a substantive headteacher whom it is anticipated will be appointed to take up post in September 2006.

Achievement and standards

In 2005 attainment at Year 11 was significantly below the national average. Only a third of the pupils achieved five or more higher grade GCSEs and 6% left school with no GCSE passes, a similar figure to 2004. Standards in art and design and drama were above the national average, but achievement was inconsistent as many subjects were significantly below average. Overall, the progress made by the pupils in their time at the school was in line with the national average but progress in English and particularly in mathematics was poor.

In 2005, results in Year 9 rose significantly in English, increased slightly in science and stayed the same in mathematics when compared with the year before. The results remained significantly below the national average. Although the overall progress made by this cohort in Key Stage 3 was significantly above average and a considerable improvement on the last two years, much of this improvement was due to the better results in English. The improvement was brought about through support from the LA, better use of data to identify groups of pupils to attend booster classes and the revision of aspects of the curriculum.

The school's targets for 2005 were broadly achieved at Key Stage 3 but not at GCSE. However, the target-setting process lacked rigour and, overall, there was inadequate use of data to make departments accountable for the pupils' progress or by pastoral leaders to consider relevant support for groups of pupils.

Progress in the lessons observed was inconsistent. Whilst it was good in a third of the lessons, it was inadequate in a similar number. Inadequate progress was usually because work was not well matched to the pupils' learning needs, or behavioural issues.

The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language is not adequately monitored. Work in lessons does not adapt to meet their needs, which means that their progress is hampered.

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

- Raise standards of pupil achievement – inadequate progress

Personal development and well-being

Little progress has been made in the areas which were identified as being inadequate. The attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils give cause for concern. Pupils made insufficient progress in one third of the lessons observed because their behaviour was unsatisfactory. There are detailed policies and guidelines for staff on managing the pupils' behaviour in the classroom, but they are inconsistently applied.

Overall, there is an orderly atmosphere around the school and the pupils are usually polite and courteous, but tensions sometimes emerge, particularly outside school. For example, an incident involving members of different communities occurred during this monitoring visit and threats were made. The school is concerned about intimidation and recognises that a minority of pupils have racist attitudes that are not always evident in the classroom. These attitudes are not helped by the inadequate emphasis which is given to the pupils' cultural development. The increasing ethnic and cultural diversity is regarded by many members of the school community as a problem and not something to be celebrated. There are initiatives to involve the local community more in school life, but many pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to be involved in the wider community beyond the school. Nor do they have a particularly strong voice within the school: the school council is not effective in all year groups.

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

- Raise standards of pupil behaviour and offer a more harmonious and cohesive community for all pupils – inadequate progress

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are inconsistent, and inadequate overall. In a third of the lessons observed, the teaching was unsatisfactory. In less successful lessons, teachers did not use information about the pupils' attainment effectively when they planned their lessons. This resulted in higher attaining pupils being insufficiently challenged because they were given the same activity as other pupils. In addition, tasks were often too difficult for lower attaining pupils, pupils who have learning difficulties and pupils who speak a language other than English.

Where the teaching was inadequate, the teachers sometimes had low expectations, especially of the pupils' behaviour. Too often, antisocial behaviour was allowed to interfere with learning. The teachers did not always

handle disruptive behaviour effectively and spoke over the noise of pupils. In a few instances, relationships between teachers and pupils were poor.

In contrast, the teaching was good in a third of the lessons. In these lessons, teachers made sure that all instructions were clear and that the pupils knew what they had to complete before the end of the lesson. Relationships between the teacher and the pupils were good and the pupils enjoyed the activities they were given because they were well matched to their abilities. The way these lessons were planned and organised promoted good learning for all pupils.

The teachers' marking of the pupils' work does not consistently inform them of what they need to do to improve. Too often it is not marked at all.

The provision for pupils who have special educational needs is inadequate. School improvement plans are not used effectively to improve learning either in lessons or in some withdrawal groups. Teachers do not consistently match work accurately to pupils' individual needs. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are now assessed on entry to school and this is an improvement. However, the next step, of drawing up individual targets and sharing them with teachers, has not been developed. At present, teachers are given too little information effectively to improve pupils' spoken language. The co-ordinators for special educational needs and English as an additional language have little idea of how well pupils are doing across all areas of the curriculum.

A good start has been made in revising the assessment system. All staff have access to relevant data in order to set appropriate targets for the pupils, and the senior staff are enabled to track progress. However, this has yet to have a significant impact on teachers' planning. The responsibilities of year leaders and heads of faculty for monitoring and evaluating actions arising from the analysis of this data are unclear. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment, particularly in non-core subjects, are inconsistent.

Pupils who are withdrawn to the Learning Support Unit (LSU) because they have behavioural difficulties receive good quality support from the teacher and the learning mentor. Pupils enjoy these sessions, behave well and positively accept the support they are given. They develop good relationships with the adults who help them in the LSU. However, their relationships are not always as strong with other teachers.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning for all pupils especially those who need support and those who require greater challenge - inadequate progress.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher inherited a school with fundamental problems and no history of strategic leadership. His main focus was identified as the prevention of further decline. He has been successful in establishing a senior leadership team, building on the initiative of the deputy head. During her brief tenure in charge, she instigated the practice of morning meetings to review the events of the day, plan the supervision of possible behaviour hotspots and ensure a consistent response was made to serious breaches of discipline by pupils. This has been sustained by the acting head and supplemented by a weekly formal senior team meeting. The concept of a leadership team has been revolutionary and leaders are just beginning to gain a sense of whole-school issues and coherence, but they do not yet really know their school. The school has neither a history nor culture of effective monitoring.

The acting headteacher has correctly identified the school's weaknesses but has seen his chief responsibilities as maintaining morale and the retention of staff. Therefore despite the recognition of the school's weaknesses, there is little evidence of urgent action to bring about rapid improvement. Isolated pockets of good practice exist and from time to time initiatives have been introduced to improve the quality of provision. However, there has been little follow-up and an absence of monitoring, so initiatives have never embedded.

A clear action plan for improvement has been drawn up and responsibilities allocated to specified individuals, but implementation is slow because there is a lack of clarity at all levels regarding expectations and responsibilities. Senior leaders are distracted from their strategic role because they have to manage operational matters, partly because of the challenging circumstances of the school, but also because many middle leaders are not adequately carrying out their own responsibilities.

Staff at all levels suffer from a legacy of insufficient professional development. There has been a good uptake for the 'leading from the middle course' showing a willingness on the part of teachers to develop their roles, but this programme has not yet taken place.

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

- Leaders and managers need to recognise urgently the weaknesses and identify the immediate priorities and direction for the school - inadequate progress

- Produce a clear action plan for improvement, the success of which can be measured and evaluated - satisfactory progress

External support

The LA has been the source of many initiatives and the school receives frequent visits from advisors. The authority has financed additional appointments to the senior leadership team and has funded a range of consultancy support. The LA's statement of action is clear and well reasoned. A cogent rationale is given for supporting the present governing body which the authority is enhancing with high level additional appointments. However, while there has been a lot of support, the impact is yet to be seen because the school is only beginning to develop the capacity to improve. The LA's target date for removal from special measures is optimistic.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Quality of LA's statement of action – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- provide high quality monitoring and coaching of staff to bring about swift and significant improvements in the quality of teaching
- Implement consistently the school's procedures for behaviour management
- Improve the effectiveness of the senior leadership team through developing their strategic roles

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
H M Inspector