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Mrs Kryz Marshall  
The Headteacher  
The Ash Technology College  
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Dear Mrs Marshall

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE ASH TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Additional Inspectors, Cyndi Millband and Alan Brewerton, to your college on 3 and 4 July 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the college became subject to special measures in March 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 20 lessons across the college, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, a number of other senior staff, a group of students, a governor, and representatives from the local authority.

### **Context**

Since the last visit, one teacher has left and a senior teacher who will oversee music has been appointed. The college has 793 students on roll. A curriculum review is being undertaken in the local area.

## Achievement and standards

Standards at Key Stage 3 (KS3) and GCSE are below average. Unvalidated test data indicates that targets in mathematics and science have been met. Internal data indicates that the target for KS3 English is also likely to be met. The target for information and communication technology (ICT) was exceeded with 75% of students judged to be at Level 5 or above. At GCSE the target of 43% to gain 5+ higher grades is also likely to be met.

These actual and predicted results indicate that progress in English and mathematics is satisfactory but not in science. Internal data indicates that whilst 70% of students made two or more levels of progress during Key Stage 3 in mathematics, only a fifth of students made similar progress in science. A significant number of pupils attained the higher levels in mathematics, where targeted work with higher attainers has been successful. This is not the case in science; an extra 'girls only' group was created in Year 9, but the effects have yet to be evaluated.

An intensive programme of support and booster classes was undertaken; there is evidence of the success of this approach in mathematics. More work has also been undertaken with regards to GCSE by repeating mock examinations in the spring term. Internal estimates indicate signs of improved performance by students.

Good progress was observed in half the lessons seen; this is an improvement on the previous visit. The quality of the assessment information held by teachers is now more consistent, but there is some variability in how well it is used.

Following the last visit, the college has undertaken a detailed analysis of its 2005 results, recognising that achievement was inadequate; it is making plans for improvement in key areas. There are plans to introduce the Ash 'challenge' grade to raise expectations beyond the mean 'expected' grade.

With regards to the key issue, there is evidence of some progress in science and music, but not in religious education. The senior team has begun a regular scrutiny of the quality and quantity of work completed by students, the latest review has indicated some progress in terms of using the college's assessment policy; it is recognised that more needs to be done with regards to marking students' books and monitoring their progress regularly.

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

- Urgently raise standards in science, music and religious education - satisfactory progress.

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

Students' personal development remains satisfactory, as noted on the previous visit. Attitudes were good in ten lessons and inadequate in two of the 20 lessons seen. In the good lessons students worked with good concentration and responded positively to the tasks set. In the inadequate lessons students did not engage well; in one case this was because the worksheet was of poor quality.

Behaviour is satisfactory overall and often good in lessons and also around the school. The improvement noted in the last visit has been maintained, as confirmed by staff and students. The rewards system has been helpful and generally valued by most students. Good progress has been made in terms of the behaviour policy, but ongoing work continues to be needed in order to sustain the improvements.

There is detailed analysis of the levels of sanctions being applied; according to students, some inconsistency in the application of sanctions remains, but the approach has been successful and has led to better behaviour. Students also noted that their discussions over bullying have led to concrete actions such as the introduction of a 'comments' box and a place to discuss bullying if necessary.

The rate of exclusions has decreased in the summer term, though it had risen in the spring term this year, compared to the rate of exclusions in the spring term of 2005. The rate of exclusions remains quite high. In spring 2006, 95 students had fixed term exclusions for an average of three days; for the first part of the summer term this has dropped to 36 students for an average of just under three days.

Attendance is low and remains an area of concern. During the visit, the attendance in classes observed was 85%, which is higher than the last inspection. The school is aware of the issue and has plans for a concerted effort to improve attendance from September, working in close partnership with other agencies such as the educational welfare service.

With regards to the promotion of healthy lifestyles, the canteen has a healthy option daily and does not sell sweets or chocolates. Water is made available

for students to drink in classes, which was particularly appropriate since there was an exceptionally warm spell during the inspection.

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

- Review the behaviour policy, with students, and make sure all teachers apply it consistently - good progress.

### **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last visit. In the 20 lessons observed, teaching was good in half of them and inadequate in three. Good lessons were seen in a range of subjects, including English, drama, mathematics and music. For example, students with special educational needs (SEN) were taught clearly about different tenses, leading to progress in literacy skills. Performance skills were well developed in a drama lesson, where students were made aware of the extra skills needed to attain Level 5. In satisfactory lessons, teachers explain ideas clearly but do always not challenge students sufficiently. In inadequate lessons, the tasks are unimaginative and do not engage students, sometimes leading to inappropriate behaviour.

Teaching is regularly observed and lesson plans are checked by senior managers who acknowledge the need for more consistent planning. Teachers are supported in developing their knowledge and understanding about behaviour management and teaching styles.

The quality of marking is variable. In the best cases there is consistent and regular marking and teachers write comments that are helpful in showing students how to improve. However, as shown by internal monitoring, some teachers do not mark books regularly nor do they provide regular feedback to students on their progress, especially when the work produced is limited in quantity and quality. Students often do not know the level at which they are working and their targets for each subject; there are plans for a new system of target-setting, supported by time for review, from September.

There is good support for those with emotional and behavioural needs and those with learning difficulties. A multi-professional team approach is given to students with different special needs. This has increased the rate of their progress in mathematics and literacy. Students with learning difficulties work

to targets, which are clear and concise. Their progress is checked and teaching assistants provide extra support when needed.

Child protection arrangements are in place and key people have been trained in this work. Risk assessments are in place and have to be noted on all lesson plans. Students acknowledge that there is some bullying, but say that it is dealt with quickly.

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

- Ensure that all students with special educational needs get the support they need - fully met.

### **Leadership and management**

Since the last monitoring visit, effective strategies have led to good improvements in a number of areas such as behaviour management. A head of student progress has been appointed, not only to monitor the progress of a year group, but also to maintain an oversight of music, thereby addressing the issue relating to the appointment of curriculum leaders. However, statutory requirements have yet to be met with regards to collective worship.

The senior management team has now used a self evaluation form to analyse the performance of the college, noting that, whilst many areas are sound, some remain inadequate. This has been shared with governors but has yet to be formally approved. The governors do not ask searching questions about the college's performance.

Although forward planning for short-term improvements has taken place, strategic and financial planning for the longer term needs urgent consideration by senior managers and the governing body. The governors are not fully aware of the large deficit of about £200,000 last year, following a small surplus in the previous year. Planning is also needed to adapt to a scenario of falling rolls in the local area, which will increase the financial pressure. The college is currently fully staffed but some teachers are leaving at the end of term. Steps may be needed to ensure that the college continues to have enough teachers to match the curriculum.

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

- Persevere with all efforts to appoint heads of departments for science, music and religious education and to appoint enough

- qualified, specialist teachers to match the curriculum - good progress.
- Ensure that statutory requirements are met in the daily act of collective worship, control technology and more use of ICT in all subjects by students in Year 10 and 11 - good progress on ICT and control technology, where statutory requirements are met; inadequate progress on collective worship.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide extensive support from a range of consultants who have, for example, helped the college to improve its use of assessment information to improve standards. They have also provided help with regards to behaviour management. A school improvement partner has been appointed but has yet to visit the college. The effectiveness of the support from the local authority has yet to be fully evaluated.

Whilst the local authority has an awareness of the college's strengths and weaknesses, there is a need for support in key areas to fulfil its commitment to remove the college from special measures by March 2007. In particular, as recognised in a meeting to monitor the college's progress, there is an urgent need for appropriate advice and support to governors to enable long term strategic and financial planning in the light of falling rolls and a large, unexpected budget deficit.

### **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory progress.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory progress.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed in English, mathematics, ICT and modern foreign languages.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Raise standards by setting higher expectations of students' progress.
- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning by improving the quantity and quality of work completed by students in each lesson.

- Document and implement more systematic long – term strategic and financial planning.

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

Yours sincerely

Ramesh Kapadia  
**H M Inspector**