



3 July 2006

Mr Mark Keary  
The Headteacher  
Bethnal Green Technology College  
Gosset Street  
Bethnal Green  
London  
E2 6NW

Dear Mr Keary

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BETHNAL GREEN TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Lynne Kauffman, Additional Inspector and Peter McGregor, Additional Inspector, to your school on 21 and 22 June 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 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 headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teaching staff, groups of students, representatives from the local authority and the police.

### **Context**

Immediately following the inspection in October 2005 the headteacher left. The local authority acted quickly to appoint an experienced interim headteacher. A permanent headteacher took up post at the end of May and this visit took place during his third week in the role.

## **Achievement and standards**

The achievement and standards of students in external examinations were reported in detail in the letter following the last monitoring inspection in March 2006. Teacher assessments of students' achievements indicate that standards are expected to be a little higher at GCSE in 2006 than in 2005. In Year 9, standards in English are likely to be similar to those of 2005, and higher in mathematics and science.

Since the last monitoring visit, progress has been made in distributing centrally held test data to staff but insufficient use is made of this information to raise standards. Teachers now hold key information on how well students in their classes have done in the past, but not all students are given academic targets. Insufficient tracking and target-setting information is available for staff about students for whom English is an additional language and this restricts the progress they make.

In lessons, students' progress remains inconsistent and dependent upon the quality of teaching. Progress in about a third of lessons observed was inadequate. In these sessions insufficient account was taken of students' prior learning, their capabilities and learning needs. Students for whom English is an additional language become passive listeners rather than active learners because work is not related well enough to their understanding of English. The progress made by students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and made by the most capable, is teacher dependent, ranging from unsatisfactory to very good. In just under half of all lessons seen, students made good progress, where they improved their knowledge and understanding.

The overall picture is of some progress made in improving the tracking and target-setting system, but too little impact of data-analysis on raising students' standards, and too much inadequate teaching which restricts learning in lessons.

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

- Raise standards of student achievement – inadequate

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

There has been satisfactory progress in the areas of personal development and well-being identified in the previous monitoring visit. Attitudes and behaviour have improved because more consistent use of the behaviour policy and vigilance of staff in classrooms and around the school are

promoting a calmer and more orderly atmosphere. Students are more confident because they understand the need for positive behaviour management and the associated rewards and sanctions. Attendance is monitored and showing a slight improvement but despite sound initiatives such as class competition, is still below the school's target. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is stronger in social and cultural aspects.

Many recent initiatives are tackling the issue of promoting 'a harmonious, cohesive community for all students'. Lunch and break times are civilised occasions. Students are generally interested in and willing to talk about their school life. Teams created within staff duty rotas and the introduction of youth mentors to coordinate lunch-time games are having a positive impact on relationships and fair play. The school council has strengthened. Members explained their role and how their election gives them the opportunity to be the voice of their peers; they see they can make a difference to school life through the democratic process. Community spirit has been enlivened through activities such as the 'Bike Project', 'Bridges for Africa', student mediators and the 'Student Voice Project'. Coordination and use of the community as a resource is good. Students are challenged to think of others through their charity work and by working in teams they build up respect for each others views and ideas.

The school has not evaluated its response to the government initiative 'Every Child Matters'. Lack of an audit misses the possibility to celebrate successes and pinpoint areas for development. For example the issue of tension within the community, mentioned in the previous visit letter, remains a concern. Students feel safer but not safe. Positive links between the school and the safer neighbourhood team are developing strategies to monitor and improve community collaboration.

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

- Raise standards of student behaviour and offer a more harmonious and cohesive community for all students – satisfactory

### **Quality of provision**

Teaching and learning remain inconsistent and inadequate overall. In about a third of lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was inadequate. Teaching was ineffective when work was not sufficiently well matched to the learning needs and prior knowledge of students. Teachers did not question students enough, or asked questions requiring single word answers, so they were not aware of students' misconceptions and difficulties. They taught what they had planned irrespective of whether students understood the work. Teachers spent too long talking, and not always with clarity, and students were expected to listen passively, which they did. The

challenge and pace of lessons fell away in group and individual work when expectations of what should be completed were too low. This had a particular impact on the learning of the higher attaining students. Some students became 'passengers' in group work, not involving themselves in what others were learning. The teaching in the inadequate lessons was too focused on imparting knowledge to the students, and not sufficiently focused on helping students to learn.

Teaching assistants were not involved enough in some lessons. They tend to react to requests for help rather than identifying and responding to needs. Team work between teachers and assistants was weak at times.

In about half the lessons seen teaching was good, an improvement on the situation at the time of the last visit. In these lessons material that was appropriate to the ability of the pupils was taught with confidence. Students of all backgrounds and capabilities understood what was expected of them and they worked hard to achieve the learning intentions for the lesson. Occasionally, teaching was outstanding.

Modern technology, such as digital projection, is used well to present questions and ideas to students. Well-prepared text and images captured students' interest and were used to particularly good effect at the beginning of sessions.

Students' behaviour is managed well. No incidents were observed where student misconduct interrupted teaching and learning. This represents a transformation since the last monitoring visit. At times, students tried to listen and complete work, without any disruption, even when tasks set were too difficult or explanations were unclear.

Marking remains an area of weakness. In some books few helpful comments are written, whilst in others constructive comments provide a clear agenda for improvement. Lower attainers' books have too much incomplete work, without comment or follow through to ensure it is finished and understood. Monitoring of work and marking is taking place in faculties but this has not yet resulted in consistent and good quality assessment. Senior leaders are working with faculties to moderate end of Year 9 subject assessments. This has resulted in an improvement in the accuracy and consistency with which National Curriculum levels are allocated. A few teachers set students clear achievable objectives which help them work towards their targets. This good practice is inconsistently applied and has not had sufficient impact on raising achievement.

The quality of teaching and learning for students who need support and those who require greater challenge remains inadequate, this is particularly so for students who speak English as a second language. Many of this group can use English but comprehension of language is their biggest hurdle. There

are a series of initiatives that are leading to improvement. There are new systems for monitoring teaching with a focus on the teachers' response to different groups. Teaching assistants are being deployed in faculty groups and systems are in place to improve planning and match work to students needs more successfully. There is now an open door policy of the special needs area. However, there is inconsistency in the way staff apply these initiatives as their skills and understanding are variable.

The curriculum is under review to make it more relevant to the students. A new option system for 14-16 courses is being implemented, moving to more coeducational groups enabling the provision of a greater range of subjects and more choice for students.

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

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

## **Leadership and management**

There have been good improvements in leadership and management in the last three weeks. Staff at all levels report a new found sense of accountability and are responding positively. In preparation for their weekly meeting senior leaders are each required to produce a report summarising the impact of their work. Middle leaders are much clearer about their role and several continue to be enthused by the Leading From The Middle programme which is raising their level of leadership skill. Communication has improved through a daily staff briefing. Policies that have existed as paper documents are now being implemented much more than in the past. The improvement plan provides a guide to action and with the arrival of the new headteacher is soon to be reviewed. This is all providing a framework for improvement but it is too early to see impact other than in pupil behaviour.

Whilst the rate of improvement has been ratcheted up in the last three weeks, improvements were already underway. There is a fortnightly professional development programme focussing on teaching and learning. The proportion of good teaching has increased although the level of inadequate teaching remains far too high. There have been improvements in the collection of data but teachers are not yet confident in knowing what to do with it.

Leaders have credible information on the strengths and weakness of each teacher based on extensive monitoring. Observations have been moderated by the local authority and during this monitoring visit the results of joint observations were generally agreed. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the quality of middle leadership. The school now knows its

strengths and weaknesses very well but has yet to use the information to bring about urgent improvement

Good partnerships exist which are helping in the school's recovery and raising the school's reputation. Businesses provide direct support to students in the school by providing adults to work with students ranging from careers guidance to help with reading. Links with at least one local primary school are good. During the visit, Year 6 students received good teaching in technology as part of the school's specialist status and the support from the school was praised. The school works closely with the police safer neighbourhood team and co-operation is greatly improved. Expectations of acceptable conduct are now clearly established and sanctions are firmly applied and this has quickly improved the learning environment. The safety of staff and students is rightly the main concern of the new headteacher.

Despite recent good improvements, the improvement in leadership and management since the last monitoring visit is only satisfactory overall and progress since the school was made subject to special measures nine months ago has been far too slow. There has been inadequate progress in raising standards and in tackling the unacceptable levels of inadequate teaching and learning. There have been a range of improvements in personal development and well-being but the Every Child Matters agenda has yet to have a significant impact on the life of the school. Whist pockets of good practice and good initiatives are evident there is too much inconsistency. These issues continue to pose urgent challenges for the school's leadership and management.

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

### **External support**

The local authority continues to monitor the school on a weekly basis. It knows the school well and provides good support in all areas of the school. It has been instrumental in arranging the early arrival of the new headteacher by negotiating with his former employer.

### **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – inadequate

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed until further notice.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Take action to reduce the proportion of inadequate teaching and bring about swift and significant improvement.
- Instigate an audit of Every Child Matters to focus on celebration of success and stressing areas for urgent development.

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**