



9 June 2006

Mr B Jordan
Headteacher
Bebington High Sports College
Higher Bebington Road,
Bebington,
Wirral,
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CH63 2PS

Dear Mr Jordan

MONITORING INSPECTION OF BEBINGTON HIGH SPORTS COLLEGE'S INADEQUATE SIXTH FORM

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 7 and 8 June 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the sixth form was judged to be inadequate in October 2004.

This letter will be published 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

I scrutinised a wide range of documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher, the director of sixth form, the key-skills co-ordinator, the sixth-form tutors, the chair of governors, and representatives from the local authority (LA) and Learning and Skills Council (LSC). As this visit was carried out at the height of the examination season, I did not observe any lessons or talk with groups of students.

Context

There have been no significant contextual changes since the last monitoring visit in February 2006. A further seven Year 12 students have left the sixth form, bringing the numbers on roll to 49 in Year 12 and 17 in Year 13.

Achievement and standards

The school has responded positively to the various points made in the last monitoring letter. The setting of targets, tracking of students' progress and

analysis of performance are becoming established features in the sixth form. This represents a significant improvement in comparison with a year ago.

Most students sat AS and A2 unit examinations in some subjects in January. The results have been analysed in appropriate ways, such as comparisons with students' target minimum grades. Approximately one third of the Year 12 students' results were in line with their target grades, one third exceeded them and one third fell below. This is not as strong a picture as was reported at the last visit when the school predicted that students would achieve at least in line with their target minimum grades. The Year 13 students performed slightly better with just over a half exceeding their target grades. The overall pass rate in the AS units was 68% and it was 82% in the A2 units. Analysis by subject identified where performance was stronger, such as in mathematics, or weaker. In the latter case, suitable action has been taken to promote improvement.

The school continues to track students' progress and is predicting that in the summer most students will improve upon the January results, where applicable, and achieve or exceed their target grades. This would represent an improvement in standards at AS and A levels. All students studying level 2 Business and technology Education Council (BTEC) courses are expected to pass. A number of students have already passed key skills qualifications, mostly at level 2, and more are poised to do so. Since the last visit, the deputy headteacher has investigated whether students' targets, which are based on their general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) results, unintentionally condone any underachievement at GCSE and found that this was the case for a minority of students. Sensibly, he intends to use such analysis and a wider range of data to ensure appropriate targets are set for all students next year.

A start has been made in encouraging departments to reflect on the performance of their students to identify and share features of their practice that contribute to higher achievement. Work has continued in developing portfolios of assessed work in each subject; at present, these are of variable quality. The school has also usefully explored, through a recent questionnaire, students' involvement in marking their own work and evaluating that of their peers. Again, there is some variation between subjects, but this provides a good starting point for further development.

Progress on the area for improvement:

Area 1: raise standards at the ends of Years 12 and 13 by improving academic targets, setting and monitoring – satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

No evidence on students' personal development and well-being was gathered on this visit.

Quality of provision

The school has focused on improving the use of assessment to promote learning in all key stages and reports that this work has been received well by staff, many of whom have attended twilight sessions to help improve this aspect of their teaching. A recent development has been the identification of two effective practitioners to become 'assessment for learning' coaches. The intention is that they will work with colleagues who opt for coaching. They have received appropriate guidance and training in preparation for this work, supported by an assistant headteacher and a consultant from the LA. A further eight teachers have been selected from many volunteers to become coaches. This reflects a willingness among staff to improve teaching skills. The school should consider how it might gauge the impact of this work and other initiatives on the quality of teaching .

No lessons were observed during this visit. The LA has carried out nine observations, of which eight were paired with senior staff, and found the teaching to be satisfactory or better, although students' progress was less secure. The school reports, however, that the work on assessment is beginning to help close the gap between the quality of teaching and learning.

To date, 94 Year 11 pupils, including five from other local schools, have expressed interest in entering the sixth form. All have been interviewed, their achievement and attitude considered, and they have been advised about appropriate courses. About half have been accepted and many others made offers provisional on their GCSE results. New vocational courses at levels 2 and 3 are attracting some students but there remains work to be done to convince pupils and their parents of the value and appropriateness of vocational pathways. The sixth-form tutors have talked with Year 12 students about progression into Year 13 and other options. Almost all those studying AS courses are expected to continue into Year 13. A four-day conference 'play your part in life for beginners' has been arranged for early July. It includes many useful and interesting sessions for the students, ranging from information about university and job applications, personal finance, drug and alcohol awareness, and discussion and debate about contemporary issues.

A programme for religious education and personal, health, social and citizenship education has now been drawn up for 2006-07. In addition, lessons in key skills are to be timetabled twice weekly and staffed by specialists in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) so that students can receive appropriate support and guidance in their chosen key skill. The key skills co-ordinator has benefited from support from Learning and Skills Network personnel in planning for next year. A new initiative, which includes a strong community dimension, is the introduction of an accredited course in personal effectiveness. A pilot group of Year 12 students will embark on this shortly. In addition, sixth-form students are running a summer fair on 1 July, having managed all aspects of the project with support from the Wirral Enterprise Advisory Service.

Progress on the areas for improvement:

Area 2: improve the quality of teaching – not evaluated during this visit. Satisfactory progress was reported in February.

In relation to the curriculum planned for 2006-07, and advice and guidance provided for students, good progress overall has been made on **Area 3**:

- **modify the curriculum so it meets the needs of all students;**
- **improve the students' basic skills, such as ICT, and the capacity for independent study;**
- **improve advice and guidance to prospective sixth-form students so that they are directed to appropriate courses in which they are likely to succeed, whether the courses are at school or elsewhere.**

Leadership and management

The quality of senior management continues to improve, building on the more positive outlook noted at the last visit. Many of the management systems introduced over the last year are becoming embedded features of the work of the sixth form, and some are leading developments across the wider school; for example, developments in data and assessment. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made in addressing the specific priorities for improvement identified in the last monitoring letter.

Day-to-day management of the sixth form continues to improve and is satisfactory. The director of sixth form is developing a clearer vision of the future development of the sixth form and where the next priorities lie. He manages the small team of form tutors satisfactorily but, as the sixth form expands, there is an urgent need to consider the professional development requirements of tutors as they take on unfamiliar responsibilities, for example Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) guidance and applications, or of tutors who will be new to the team in September. Monitoring of students' progress is now an established part of tutors' work. Next year, it is planned that the regular one-to-one discussions between students and their tutors are complemented by a review and target setting day involving students and their parents.

The director of sixth form analyses data on students' attendance to lessons and keeps tutors appropriately informed. He reports that teachers are generally reliable about identifying absentees from lessons. However, there remain inconsistencies in the data on students' attendance to school. Class lists are not always accurate and numbers recorded as present in lesson observations do not always reflect the level of overall attendance as stated by the school. The school intends to introduce electronic registration during 2006-07; this has the potential to increase the reliability of data.

The headteacher has reviewed the performance management targets for senior staff but some success criteria are not sharply defined and it is unclear what evidence might be gathered to support their fulfilment; others relate to completion of tasks. Some of the headteacher's own targets, although relating to important areas, could also be more precisely defined. The headteacher has set up a programme of regular one-to-one meetings with senior staff: this is a positive development and so far, at this early stage, the meetings reportedly have been useful. The headteacher has requested that the senior staff write an evaluation of their work prior to the meetings but this has not worked well, in

some part due to staff's inexperience of such evaluative writing. However, a principal impediment is that their areas of responsibility are not integral to an effective whole-school development plan that has clearly defined actions, time lines, arrangements for monitoring and evaluation and associated success criteria. The current plan has a number of weaknesses: there is no overarching senior leadership of priority areas, no arrangements for monitoring and evaluation are identified and most success criteria relate to completion of tasks rather than intended impact. In September, the senior team will be at full strength following the appointment of a second deputy headteacher and consequently senior leadership responsibilities are being reviewed. The team's intention to write a new development plan is timely and provides an opportunity to set out a clear path through the remaining important priorities for improvement while recognising the progress made to date. While the current plan rightly reflects the importance of pupils' achievement in relation to their starting points, it would be appropriate to emphasise high expectations as well by including targets for the standards to be achieved in each key stage.

The governing body continues to keep a close check on the progress of the sixth form and the school more generally. Governors ask relevant questions but minutes of meetings do not always capture clearly enough points for action or for clarification; for example, a request by governors on more detailed data on exclusions. The file of minutes held at school could be improved by the inclusion of agendas and copies of documents such as the headteacher's report to governors. Links between governors and subjects are in the early stages of development. A protocol for visits has been agreed but there remains some uncertainty on the part of governors as to how this role might develop. The LA might consider working with governors and subject leaders to find ways to help these links develop beneficially for both parties. Since the last visit, an analysis of sixth-form costs has been carried out and the school has concluded that Key Stage 4 subsidises the sixth form to a small extent.

Progress on the area for improvement:

Area 4: improve leadership and management of the sixth form at all levels of management in the school and ensure staff and governors are well aware of what best practice is in a modern sixth form –
satisfactory progress

External support

The LA continues to meet its commitment to the sixth form and in supporting whole-school strategies for improvement. As the school's progress has built momentum, the LA has been able to taper the level of its support and concentrate on providing help in areas identified by the school; for example, on assessment for learning. The LA should now work with the school as it constructs a new development plan, integrating LA support as required.

The school is ceasing its links with Wirral Metropolitan College at the end of this term and plans to deliver courses in house. The '14-19 learning community' currently plays no role in the work of the school. The school and LA should explore with the LSC whether there are any potentially fruitful partnerships that

might enrich the work of the school and the range of opportunities provided for the pupils and sixth-form students. This could be particularly relevant in the light of future developments such as specialised diplomas.

Main Judgements

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – **satisfactory**

Progress since the sixth form was identified as inadequate – **inadequate, although the rate of progress has improved in recent months.**

Priorities for further improvement

- continue to refine assessment systems and data analysis and develop the role of subject leaders in their use;
- in readiness for September 2006, ensure staff are suitably prepared for new roles and/or teaching new courses, and plan systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of their work;
- develop the evaluative skills of managers at all levels;
- construct a new school development plan.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Learning and Skills Council, and the Director of Education and Cultural Services for Wirral.

Yours sincerely

Jane Jones
H M Inspector