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Mr Mark Duke
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Dear Mr Duke

OFSTED MONITORING OF GRADE 3 SCHOOLS

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I visited your college on 6th July, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to those members of the senior leadership team, the local authority (LA) locality manager and those students with whom I held discussions.

The inspection in February of this year identified the following issues for improvement: behaviour; the quality of teaching; and to develop the use of consultation with parents and students.

Having considered carefully all the evidence presented by the college and the local authority together with evidence from Ofsted data I am of the opinion that at this time the college is making satisfactory progress on these issues. In improving behaviour, progress is good.

The college has adopted a number of strategies since September 2005 to improve behaviour and to ensure that the college's behaviour policy is implemented consistently. Their impact at the time of the inspection in February was reported as patchy but there is now good evidence that these strategies are proving effective. This success is seen in a fall in the number exclusions by about 20% since last year and in the number of incidents of bullying or harassment. Withdrawals of students from lessons to the college's internal referral unit have also reduced by 50% over the same period.

This good progress is due in part to the effective leadership provided by the Student Progress Team Leader and his staff in driving forward the college's action plan to improve behaviour. Imaginative initiatives and partnerships with LA staff, such as the recent Year 9 behaviour project, have also

contributed to improvements and to changing some teachers' classroom practice. Students say that they appreciate these improvements and they feel secure and safe around the college because it is now well supervised. Lateness to college is also greatly reduced. The college's expectations of students are higher and systems for managing and improving behaviour and students' punctuality are now becoming more systematic and embedded in the college's routines. Further work is in progress to match the curriculum better to students' needs, particularly those at risk of becoming disaffected.

A key focus for the college has been to change the culture among staff so that they take more responsibility for managing students' behaviour themselves and use the college's systems of referral consistently and only in instances that warrant it. This is work-in-progress and while some staff have responded well to the college's support and guidance, there remain a few whose management in lessons remains weak, particularly in mathematics.

The college's systems for checking and improving the quality of teaching have been revised recently. They are now more robust and focus support and actions where they are most needed. In particular, more emphasis is rightly being placed on evaluating students' learning, progress and engagement in lessons. Teachers then receive specific feedback and guidance from the best practitioners. There is still much to do to implement these developments fully, for example, in training subject leaders and others to use the college's new framework rigorously and consistently.

Progress in improving the quality of teaching is satisfactory and the amount of inadequate teaching has been reduced, particularly in mathematics. In September, new experienced staff and members of the senior leadership team will be deployed to teach this subject to build on the improvements.

The college is making satisfactory progress in consulting parents and students and involving them in the college's work. Changes to the format of parents' meetings have resulted in higher attendance and parents are also responding to on-line surveys and consultations in greater numbers. Students say that they feel consulted on college matters such as current proposals to change the college day and the structure of tutor groups. However, there is still not enough communication with parents to inform them about the college's progress with its priorities, for example, its recent work to improve behaviour and how they can be involved more. Plans are in place to issue newsletters more frequently and much has been done to raise the college's profile in the community through the local press.

I hope you find these evaluations helpful in taking your college forward. I wish you every success in your efforts to improve the college.

Yours sincerely

Ray Jardine
Reporting Inspector