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19 July 2007

Mr Roderick James
The Headteacher
Humphry Davy School
Coombe Road
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Dear Mr James

Ofsted Monitoring of Grade 3 Schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I visited your school on 9 July 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would particularly like to thank the students and the staff for freely giving of their time at such a busy time.

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.

As a result of the inspection in June 2006, the school was asked to: raise standards and improve achievement, particularly for the more able pupils; establish clear lines of accountability; monitor teaching and learning systematically and rigorously; and, share good practice in teaching and departmental self-evaluation within the school and from outside it.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievements.

The 2006 results at Year 9 were very encouraging, with a substantial improvement in standards and achievement in English. Overall progress from Year 7 to Year 9 is good. However, results in the 2006 examinations at Year 11 were worse than 2005 and the students underachieved. The school's predictions for 2007 suggest that the GCSE results are likely to be close to those achieved in 2006. This confirms that, whilst standards are no longer falling, students are still underachieving. The school now has the capacity to identify students who are underachieving and a programme of intervention for targeted students in Years 9 and 11 demonstrates the new focus

the school has on maximising achievement. The school has put in place an extensive programme of support and challenge for the more able students, a group who were identified as underachieving at the time of the last inspection. There is a gifted and talented coordinator in place and subject leaders are making explicit provision for them both in lessons and in schemes of work. Whilst this is not fully embedded throughout the school, subjects such as science and English have rewritten learning programmes to ensure that all students are adequately challenged.

The school leaders, with guidance from the local authority and support from a very effective associate deputy headteacher, have put in place a robust system for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. Central to the success of this has been identifying and clarifying clear lines of accountability, so that all leaders and teachers know precisely where their responsibilities lie. This new management structure is already having an impact upon the way the school operates. For instance, the mentoring system that was in its infancy at the time of the last inspection has now become part of the custom and practice of the school and mentors work effectively with subject teachers to support and challenge students. Students value the close support they receive and there is now a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all staff who have leadership responsibility. The learning communities, which had been created to replace the old departmental leadership just before the last inspection, are now more established. However, the senior leaders recognise that, whilst there has been progress in many areas, the full impact of the changes is yet to be fully evaluated. In large communities such as 'Topaz,' which includes science, technology and art, significant support from the senior leadership team is still needed to ensure that the desired improvements are delivered.

At the time of the last inspection the school's management was judged to be inadequate because the systems that it used to monitor its own performance were weak and, as a result, there was huge variation across the school. Since this time the school has put in place a robust system that has completely changed the way that the school evaluates itself. The new directors of learning communities now work within a rigorous structure of self review and are closely monitored and supported by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. All staff have been extensively trained in the use of data to analyse performance and, as a result, there is a much greater understanding of the impact that teaching is having on students' learning. A system for lesson observation and the review of students' work is in place that clearly reflects the new culture of the school. In addition to a bi-annual review of the learning community by the senior leadership team, directors of learning communities are buddied up to share best practice and carry out peer review. All aspects of self-review are now rigorously followed through. As a result of this self-evaluation, the school now has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and more accurate data with which to assess the performance of students. Because this new culture of self-evaluation is still relatively new, inconsistencies in its application still remain. However, the effectiveness of the school's procedures is now satisfactory.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Cornwall. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geoff Hancock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

Geoff Hancock
Additional Inspector