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9 July 2008

Mrs J Hislop and Mr M McPherson
The Executive and College Principals
Fullhurst Community College
Imperial Avenue
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Leicestershire
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Dear Mrs Hislop and Mr McPherson

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 25 June 2008 with Charlie Henry HMI, 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 all the staff, students and local authority officers for their contribution during the inspection programme.

Since the last inspection in November 2007, the local authority judged that the pace of change in raising standards was too slow. It intervened in the college, suspended the governing body, appointed an executive principal and received the permission from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to appoint an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to replace the governing body. This board has yet to meet for the first 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 by a team of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on 14 and 15 November 2007, the school was asked to: urgently address the need to improve the progress made by students, particularly in Key Stage 4; make better use of assessment information to plan lessons that meet the individual needs of all students; make more effective use of challenging targets to raise standards; and, share the good practice evident in some parts of the school to promote improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, self-evaluation and subject leadership.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress on these issues identified at the last inspection.

Some progress has been made on the need to urgently improve the progress made by students, particularly in Key Stage 4. Standards are predicted to improve slightly in the 2008 examinations but are not going to reach the ambitious and challenging targets set by the college. There is, however, a more focused analysis now of those students predicted to achieve borderline grades and more appropriate and targeted support specifically targeted to meet their needs. For example, higher achieving students are now entered for GCSEs early in some subjects in Year 10; C/D borderline students receive personalised support from a mentor and one to one course catch up sessions; all the lower achieving students are now entered for examinations; and, those identified by the college as non achievers are better supported in their off site courses. A review of the Key Stage 4 curriculum is helping to ensure students are appropriately challenged taking account of prior achievement. More vocational and applied courses are now on offer.

Better use is now made of assessment information to plan lessons that meet the individual needs of all students. Individual student performance data is held on a central data base that all staff can access. However, this data is used inconsistently by staff. Some students report that work is well matched to their ability and challenges them, whilst others say that the same work is given to the whole class, and homework is rarely set. The four lessons observed on the visit confirm that differentiation remains an issue for some staff. Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of student outcomes in all lessons. Lesson planning documentation has been revised a number of times since the November 2007 inspection, although learning objectives are still not sufficiently clear or measurable and neither are learning activities sufficiently differentiated. There is insufficient non teaching support in the classroom to support the wide range of ability.

More effective use is being made of challenging targets to raise standards and there is a stronger culture of discussion and debate amongst staff about improving standards. However, not all the targets set by the college after the November 2007 inspection will be met, especially at Key Stage 4. There is still some doubt whether students will reach the 30% floor targets for the percentage of students achieving 5 A* to C grades, well below the college's own 35% target. As before, students continue to make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and inadequate progress at Key Stage 4. Whilst more students are now attending their examinations, whole school attendance is not improving significantly. The figure of 90.5% attendance, whilst an improvement, remains below the 91.5% target set by the college.

The good practice evident in some parts of the college is now being shared more widely to promote improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, self-evaluation and subject leadership. Subject leaders at all levels now regularly share good practice at their departmental meetings. For example, information and communication technology learned a lot about progression between National Curriculum levels from the modern foreign languages department. The newly developed quality assurance files provide a college wide consistency for managers to moderate subject planning and improvement. Heads of department are monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their subject more now, although there remains work to do to further train middle leaders to ensure greater consistency.

The local authority (LA) statement of action following the November 2007 inspection meets the requirements. It is a clear, if ambitious, document of intended support to be provided for the college. The college judges the LA support to be of variable quality and this judgement was substantiated by those in receipt of the support on this visit. The pace and impact of intervention and support by the local authority have accelerated more recently since April 2008 due to the suspension of the governing body and the appointment of an executive principal. There is now acceptance that the leadership of the college did not act swiftly or decisively enough in the past in raising standards. The substantive principal, new executive principal, the local authority, consultant headteacher, and school improvement partner have focused the college with a more collective drive to improve the provision and raise standards, although it is too early to judge the full impact of these new arrangements on raising standards.

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 "Clive Kempton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Clive Kempton
Her Majesty's Inspector