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7 November 2008

Mr Mick Hill
Executive Principal
Risedale Sports and Community College
Hipswell
Catterick Garrison
North Yorkshire
DL9 4BD

Dear Mr Hill

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Risedale Sports and
Community College

Following my visit with Peter Bannon and Les Schubeler, Additional Inspectors, to
your school on 4 and 5 November 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief
Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to
special measures in May 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the
main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of
State, the chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Director of Children's
services for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Risedale Sports and Community College

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 4 and 5 November 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the college's work, scrutinised documents and met with: the executive principal; the associate principal; members of the college senior leadership team and colleagues from Northallerton College; a representative from the local community; the extended schools officer; a number of heads of faculty; groups of students; the chair of the IEB; a representative from the local authority (LA); and the National Challenge partner.

Context

Since the inspection in May 2008 the principal of the college has left. In July 2008 an IEB was set up to govern the school in partnership with Northallerton College as a 'soft' federation. Since September 2008 the college has been led by an executive principal, the headteacher of Northallerton College. An associate principal, seconded from Northallerton College, is responsible for the day-to day running of the college.

A number of changes have taken place at both senior and middle management levels in the college, with a redistribution of management roles and responsibilities. Since September 2008 colleagues from Northallerton College have also been advising on key aspects of the college's work, for example, on Risedale College's systems for tracking students' progress, on a part-time basis, alongside their existing commitments to Northallerton College.

In November 2008 a new head of specialism was appointed.

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement and standards in the GCSE examinations and in statutory tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in summer 2008 were inadequate. This continues the downward trend of recent years. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are too low and place the school amongst the lowest nationally. Standards in English are acutely low. Students' literacy levels are poor and this is impeding their progress overall. Students' attainment in other subjects shows a similarly poor picture.

The college is determined not to look back but to concentrate instead on how to turn this trend around. The college's leaders have taken a number of decisive actions aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning in lessons and are ensuring that teachers have better information about how students are progressing. The college has set itself realistic, but challenging targets. To this end, the progress of those students identified as being at risk of underachievement is being closely

tracked and the college is also beginning to monitor the progress of other pupils more effectively.

Whilst inspectors did see some evidence of students' work that was at average or above average levels in lessons and in a scrutiny of work, this is as yet too patchy. It is too early for the college to have evidence of raised standards and improved achievement as a result of the initiatives it has recently introduced.

Progress on the area for improvement identified at the inspection in May 2008:

- Raise standards and achievement at both key stages – inadequate

Personal development and well-being

Students' behaviour is satisfactory. When teaching is good or better students show a good attitude and respond well. As a consequence they learn effectively and make good progress. When teaching fails to grab their attention or too little is expected of them then their concentration lapses and they make little progress.

The attendance of students has improved since the previous inspection. The college's concentrated efforts to reduce absence by targeting and supporting students with poor attendance records and rewarding good attendance for all are bearing fruit. Attendance in the current Years 9 and 11, and in Year 10 which was a particular concern highlighted in the inspection report in May 2008, is now in line with national figures, as is attendance overall.

The college has put more staffing and time into motivating and supporting students at risk of exclusion. There has been a significant reduction in the number of exclusions since September 2008.

Progress on the area for improvement identified at the inspection in May 2008:

- Improve attendance, especially that of students in Years 9 and 11 – satisfactory

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, with broadly equal proportions of good and satisfactory teaching now evident. However, as yet, the proportion of good teaching is insufficient to raise standards and help students to make the progress which they should.

Significant work has been undertaken by the college's leaders to improve teaching and learning. Teachers have responded positively to new, clear direction. They are now more reflective about their lessons and are sharing ideas with others. Some aspects of teaching have improved. For example, all teachers now use a common format for planning lessons and regularly make clear to students what the learning objectives are.

However, satisfactory and weaker lessons are typified by too much talk by teachers. Explanations are laboured and too long. Consequently, students become too passive in their learning. On other occasions, teachers' failure to allocate appropriate slots of time for students to complete challenging, more extended tasks results in students feeling frustrated. Expectations of what students can do are still too low. Too often teachers are unable to generate enough enthusiasm to engage all the students productively in lessons. Although teachers plan lessons in a way that structures the learning activities for students, too often the lesson plans take insufficient account of the full range of students' abilities. This restricts the overall progress that students make.

Effective lessons are underpinned by positive relationships between adults and students. Other strengths include the promotion of independent thinking and the effective use of praise to build students' confidence and self-esteem. Activities are stimulating, well paced and engage students' interest. Teachers' questions are relevant and effectively extend students' knowledge, checking how well students have learnt something and keeping their attention from wandering. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for students' individual learning needs.

The college has improved target-setting since the start of the new academic year. Assessments are completed each half term to show whether students are on target or otherwise in every subject. There is some inconsistency in the accuracy of assessment but the college is improving this with the use of moderation and external support. Students are identified for extra help and useful records are kept of intervention to support them and how effective this has been. However, these more rigorous systems are new and are still not firmly established.

Subject departments focus on particular pieces of work for these assessments. However, on a more regular basis, the quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent and does not often include written feedback on how students can improve their work. Despite this, students are well aware of their targets. They keep the targets in their planners and make reference to them. More extensive use of self and peer assessment motivates and informs students to a greater extent than at the time of the previous inspection.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2008:

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching, ensuring a more accurate use is made of assessment when planning lessons to meet the needs of all students – satisfactory
- Ensure that target-setting is sufficiently rigorous in order to identify accurately students likely to underachieve – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The new executive principal and associate principal are providing good strategic direction to the college. They quickly identified the college's strengths and weaknesses and have ensured that gaps in information about students' attainment when they join the college have been filled. They have introduced a new system to more effectively track students' progress.

The college has drawn up a good, concise improvement plan which links together the targets set by the LA and the points for improvement identified at the time of the previous Ofsted inspection. This plan sets out clearly the college's priorities and the actions required to effect improvement, with a timescale for implementation. Progress towards these is monitored fortnightly by the IEB. In addition, the heads of each subject area have written a self-evaluation document which lists the strengths and weaknesses, targets and strategies for improvement in their subject.

The new senior leaders have reorganised the college's structure and have identified clear roles and responsibilities for middle leaders. Training and mentoring are provided to help middle leaders carry out their roles more effectively. Middle leaders report increased confidence and awareness of what they need to do. They are now beginning to have at their disposal clear data about how students are doing so that they can start to build this more into how teachers plan lessons. Middle leaders are enthusiastic and energetic about these new challenges.

Standards in the specialist subject of physical education are too low and the impact of the specialist subject on raising standards in other areas of the curriculum is inadequate. However, the college has very recently appointed a new leader of specialism, who plans to extend links across subjects and to promote the sharing of expertise from within and from outside the college. On a positive note, more students than in the recent past are choosing to follow courses at the college in physical education and sports, and there is a good range of sporting activities which contribute to students' health and enjoyment.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2008:

- Ensure that middle leaders understand how to monitor and evaluate their subject areas and are effective in addressing inadequacies – satisfactory

External support

The local LA has provided good support to the college. It is working closely with the college to provide support and advice targeted on subjects or aspects of college life where, by agreement, most help is felt to be needed. The college values the high quality support provided by these specialist advisers. In addition, opportunities have been created for teachers to work alongside colleagues from other schools, to help to share good practice.

The actions detailed in the LA's statement of action have all begun as planned and have had a good impact, most noticeably on the leadership and management of the college. Since September 2008 the college has been run by an IEB and has benefited from a Local Leader in Education partnership with Northallerton College. The LA is funding the secondment and input of experienced leaders from Northallerton College to spearhead the leadership of Risedale. These leaders have made a good impact in a very short space of time. They have taken swift action on all the points for improvement specified at the time of the previous inspection and some early progress can be seen on nearly all of these. However, it is too early for the changes made and the actions taken to show impact on students' achievement and standards.

In late October 2008 the college was additionally allocated a National Challenge adviser. This role focuses principally on raising standards in the core subjects of English and mathematics. It is planned that there will be close coordination between this work and other sources of support, to ensure that resources are allocated efficiently and to avoid duplication.

Priorities for further improvement

- Consider how best to promote students' literacy, to help raise standards.