

Nord Anglia Inspections
Anglia House
Carrs Road
Cheadle
Stockport
SK8 2LA

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0161 491 4191
Direct F 0161 491 4409

13 March 2009

Ms Gill Broom
Headteacher
Hameldon Community College
Byron Street
Burnley
Lancashire
BB12 6NU

Dear Ms Broom

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hameldon Community College

Following my visit with Joseph Clark, Mary Sewell and Tony Painter, Additional Inspectors, to your college on 10–11 March 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education and Standards at Lancashire LA.

Yours sincerely

Marguerite McCloy
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Hameldon Community College

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 10–11 March 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and senior leadership team, middle leaders, the chair of governors, groups of students and a representative of the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in November 2008 two new staffing appointments have been made, an assistant headteacher with responsibility for leading professional practice, and a faculty leader of Enterprise.

Achievement and standards

The college's robust assessment and tracking systems have become increasingly well established to give a clearer picture of how well students are doing. Further staff training and development in using the systems is increasing the accuracy of available data about students' rates of progress. This information is often effectively used to identify where additional support and intervention is able to help particular groups of students to do better and ensure they do not fall behind. The setting of challenging individual and group targets has also been improved. These are now more frequently used to focus teaching and learning activities to improve progress in lessons.

An increasing number of students across the college are now reaching their targets, making progress at and sometimes above the expected rates. There are positive indications in aspects of students' performance in all core subjects. For example, the college has improved the expected outcomes for a number of Key Stage 3 students in mathematics; larger numbers of Key Stage 4 students are on track to reach the higher GCSE grades in science; and the proportion of students on track to achieve their targets in English is also encouraging. Some of these improvements are due to the college's early identification of underachievement and good strategies to ensure close monitoring of students' work.

Despite these positive features, many students continue to perform at levels below their potential. Over time, underachievement has led to students falling behind and current rates of progress are not consistently fast enough to make up for this lost potential.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise levels of achievement – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Improvements in students' behaviour and attitudes to learning continue to develop, although this can be variable from day to day. A minority of students appear determined to undermine the improvements the college is making, sometimes by attempting to orchestrate a disruption when LA advisers or inspectors appear in the classroom. This is unfortunate, as there are also many students who talk positively about the improvements they have noticed in teaching and in other aspects of the college's work, and are keen to make the most of the opportunities the college offers.

When students are closely supervised, behaviour is acceptable and often good. They generally move in an orderly fashion along corridors and outside areas between lessons. In the dining rooms, students eat and socialise together in a relaxed atmosphere. Outside they play ball games enthusiastically but with due regard to the safety of others. When unsupervised, the behaviour of some students deteriorates and there can be too much running, pushing and shoving on stairways. A number of students are smoking in toilets and on the way out of school. Students say there is bullying in school but not as much as there used to be and they know who to turn to if they feel threatened or intimidated.

Behaviour in lessons remains unpredictable. Although it is largely related to the quality of teaching, sometimes, even where teaching is good, the disruptive and hostile behaviour of a significant minority of students prevents others from learning. In Key Stage 3 this is mainly boys, although some girls in Key Stage 4 can be equally disruptive. For example, some find it hard to resist the temptation of hiding under desks to send mobile phone text messages, leading to unnecessary confrontation with their teachers. Teachers sometimes make it hard for themselves, and others, by not using the school's disciplinary system consistently when faced with poor behaviour. The college's code of conduct is a worthy aspirational statement, but many students find difficulty in relating it to their own unacceptable behaviour in lessons. Exclusions remain high but are reducing. Students across the school say they would like more incentives or rewards, not only for good behaviour, but for good achievement also. In Key Stage 3, students from different cultural backgrounds mix and get on well together.

In some classes, teachers have to work exceptionally hard to overcome indifferent and unenthusiastic attitudes to learning. However, in most classes better teaching and learning strategies are resulting in students arriving at lessons with greater motivation and a willingness to engage in the learning process.

The school has worked hard to improve attendance and has had some success. Attendance is currently higher than at a similar period last year. Attendance is highest in Years 7 and 8 and lowest in Year 9. Punctuality to school remains a concern. On the day before the inspection began, 14% of pupils were late for school. Students consider it acceptable to be late for school twice a week; this does not encourage a routine of good timekeeping. Even on the third day of lateness,

when sanctions are put into place, the college's detention system does not appear to be an effective deterrent.

A recent in-depth review identified a lack of cohesion in the college's inclusion unit. This is in a state of transition and some staff are unsure of the strategic direction the provision should take. Senior leaders are acting upon the findings of the review in order to improve its provision for vulnerable students.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve students' behaviour and attitudes to learning – satisfactory

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning continue to improve, with half of lessons now good or better. The various strands of effective teaching and learning are now coming together because the college has worked effectively to ensure that monitoring is thorough and builds upon the sharing of best practice. These systems are robust and are allowing senior leaders to both track the impact of initiatives and to fine tune the support they provide for teachers. Senior and middle leaders' clear understanding of individual teachers' strengths and areas for improvement enable professional development needs to be met quickly and appropriately. A significant number of staff have improved their skills and confidence with the support of nine of their colleagues who are trained as 'coaches'.

A higher proportion of lessons now incorporate an interactive approach because teachers and students have had specific training on working in groups to explore ideas and consolidate learning. Some of the best examples of this were seen in physical education (PE) and English where students confidently worked together to negotiate, collaborate and problem-solve within their 'teams'. However not all group discussions were as confident. In some lessons students were reluctant to speak and take part. Embarrassment and immaturity were features of these lessons and a lack of self-control resulted in inappropriate behaviour.

Planning has continued to improve in as much as teachers use a common format and students have become used to a small starter activity before the main learning. Students are also more able to evaluate how well they have done in a lesson because teachers make clear reference to expected learning outcomes. However, lessons are not always planned appropriately for learners of different abilities; although teachers understand much more about their students' previous attainment and progress, they sometimes fail to use this information to plan lessons which meet these varying needs.

Although the frequency and detail of marking has improved since the last visit the quality of feedback varies. Some marking is closely focused on the learning outcomes and gives students clear guidance on what they need to do to improve. Good examples were seen, for example in art and English. Several departments are now using strategies in which the students themselves assess their own and each

other's work. In these lessons the students have a good understanding of what they need to do next to improve because they have become very familiar with the marking criteria. In the best lessons teachers provide challenging work and set high expectations. A good example of this was seen in modern languages where younger students made lively contributions in French about their life in school.

The college's designated specialism in Business, Enterprise and Science is having a positive impact on promoting students' interests and enthusiasm. It is enhancing the curriculum through a range of school and community projects. These include enrichment days, Fairtrade School activities, and opportunities for students to deliver projects as specialist ambassadors in the college's 'family of schools' locally.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching so more of it is good or better – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The headteacher, deputy headteachers and other senior leaders are working with increased confidence and the college's capacity to improve is growing as a result. The work of LA advisers and consultants has shifted from supporting leadership and guiding staff development to moderating the senior leadership team's own self-evaluation. The role of the LA is quickly becoming that of a 'critical friend' and currently only provides quality assurance and feedback. There is close agreement between the college and the LA on the rate of progress being made and the key priorities which will bring about further improvement. The college has taken ownership of its own specific needs. Improvement plans focus well on ensuring that the impact of the college's actions is evidenced in improving outcomes for students. The impact of recent whole-staff training in assessment can be seen in teachers' more accurate judgements on levels, grades and target setting.

The headteacher demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the performance, strengths and weaknesses of each core subject faculty. Middle leaders are showing increased rigour and accountability through self-evaluation and faculty reviews. This is not yet equally strong in all subjects, but senior leaders are confident to challenge staff where improvement is still needed. A number of curriculum leaders work directly with consultants to promote more interesting and active lessons. As a result, they are now in a position not only to observe lessons and do regular scrutinies of students' books, but also to support and coach other colleagues. LA consultants have noted improvements in the effectiveness of the college's intervention strategies to raise achievement for students who are not reaching their potential.

The work of governors also makes an effective contribution to the college's strengthening capacity for improvement. For example, good efforts are made to improve the behaviour or attendance of a persistent minority of students who are unresponsive to the college's higher expectations. The students and their parents or

carers are asked to attend a meeting with a small committee of governors to try to resolve their difficulties. This is having a positive impact on the attitudes of some students who have responded well to the partnership working between college and home.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the consistency of leadership and management - satisfactory

External support

LA advisers and the college's improvement partner continue to monitor progress and offer support according to the developmental needs of the college. As a result, the focus has shifted to strengthening the skills of middle leaders, including new appointments, as the capacity of senior leaders has grown.

A recently completed external review reported on the effectiveness of the national School Improvement and Targets Unit (SITU) project which had been running for almost two years in the college. This concluded that the work on the project has been, and continues to be, a major influence in raising the quality of teaching and learning.

Priorities for further improvement

The college should continue its work on the four priorities identified in the February 2007 inspection.