

PROTECT - INSPECTION

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Mr Scott Ratheram
Acting headteacher
Headlands School and Community Science College
Sewerby Road
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Dear Mr Ratheram

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Headlands School and
Community Science College

Following my visit with Jan Bennett HMI, John Paddick and Jim Bennetts, Additional Inspectors to your school on 23 and 24 June 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2008. 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 – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to discussion with the lead inspector.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Lifelong Learning at East Riding of Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Kirby
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Headlands School and Community Science College

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 June 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the acting headteacher, other senior staff, subject leaders, a group of teachers, a group of sixth form students and the chair of the governing body.

Context

There have been no significant changes in context since the last monitoring visit.

Achievement and standards

Although there is still some evidence of students lagging behind where they should be due to the previous legacy of underachievement, there is much evidence of accelerated learning in response to better teaching. Whole-school systems to track students' progress are well-developed. Work continues to improve the reliability of the assessment information that feeds these systems. The school reports that recent training has improved the reliability of grades awarded in internal assessments. Staff are more confident in their ability to correctly assess the standard of students' work.

Senior staff are able to disaggregate the performance data for particular groups of students. For example, they were able to show the progress made by lower ability girls and those students at School Action and link the better progress of both groups in 2008-09 to specific interventions. Current measures of progress suggest that targets agreed for 2009 examination performance will be met.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise achievement and standards across the school – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour in lessons is often good and only rarely presents a problem. Where students occasionally show challenging behaviour, it is dealt with quickly and appropriately. Attitudes in lessons and elsewhere are positive. Exclusions continue to fall and are now at a low level. The Oasis provision for students temporarily excluded from lessons is effective. Behaviour around the school is generally appropriate and most students are considerate as they move through narrow corridors. Relations with staff are cordial. Students chat and play amicably. On the field at break and lunchtime they were seen enjoying a sunny day together.

The improvement in attendance already established has been sustained, though there is variation from day to day and attendance in Year 10 is often below 90%. This, and some minor timetable clashes involving students who at present attend college courses concurrent with, for example science, limit the continuity of learning for some Key Stage 4 students. Attendance in the sixth form is generally below 90% and this is a factor affecting sixth form achievement. Punctuality at the start of the day has improved greatly; it varies a little from day to day but is now generally good. At the end of break and lunch time students move to their lessons quickly. Punctuality continues to be supervised closely and very effectively by senior staff.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure systems to improve behaviour are effective and are applied consistently – good

Quality of provision

An improvement in the overall quality of teaching is reflected in the better progress that students make in their learning. The improvement has been substantial since the last monitoring visit in response to the relentless focus that senior managers have given to achieving this. A greater proportion of good teaching was observed by inspectors than at any time since the school became subject to special measures. Very effective measures have been taken to eliminate the unsatisfactory teaching observed in previous visits.

Teachers manage behaviour well so lessons normally proceed in an atmosphere conducive to learning. Teachers are using a better range of strategies to ensure that students learn quickly and enjoy school. Usually lessons proceed at a brisker pace than previously because lesson planning incorporates a much wider variety of learning activities which engage students and retain their interest. Nevertheless, some lessons that proceed at a good pace and include a wide range of activities still only generate average progress because teachers do not routinely check that all the pupils have fully understood the work before moving on. Greater consistency is required in the way middle leaders monitor and challenge weak presentation of written work, tackle marking that is too infrequent or cursory, and ensure regularity in the setting of homework. Year 9 students commented that homework is not a significant feature of their life at school.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form have improved and inspectors saw examples of good practice in English and sociology where students were encouraged to think independently. However, students say that they are not given enough help to develop independent learning skills and inspectors agree. This is reflected in the lack of high grade passes at A level. The school offers an adequate range of AS and A level courses which is being extended next year. However, the lack of substantial collaborative post-16 provision in the local area means that the needs of some students are not met as well as they could be. There are few applied courses

available and students with minimum entry requirements are struggling to cope with AS and A levels.

Students in the sixth form with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well. Those at risk of under-achievement are identified quickly and monitored carefully. A target setting and review system has been introduced but needs further refinement; a number of tutors and students have yet to be convinced of its value. The review of students' progress is not systematic enough. Tutors need additional training to help them action plan more effectively with their students. Subject teachers give freely of their time when approached for help outside lessons, but lower ability students, in particular, need a more formalised academic support if they are to succeed.

Accommodation has been extended to house the larger number of Year 12 students expected in September. An additional common room and a separate workroom have been provided and refurbished. The number of computers available in the sixth form ICT suite however, is unlikely to meet demand. Plans to collaborate with another local sixth form to broaden the post-16 offer for students at both institutions have not come to fruition. Limited opportunities exist for students with other providers.

The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are strong features of the school's work. Levels of supervision at break, movement times and lunchtimes are very good. Procedures for child protection, health and safety and risk assessment are robust, reviewed regularly and meet all requirements.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Eliminate all unsatisfactory teaching and improve the proportion of good teaching – good

Leadership and management

The pace of improvement has accelerated. The robust action taken by the acting headteacher has been effective in raising the expectations of staff and bringing the required urgency to school improvement work. Actions taken to strengthen the quality of teaching are reflected in the higher proportion of good lessons observed on this visit. Improvements in behaviour continue and action taken to reduce late arrival at the start of the school day has had a marked impact. Complacency has no place at Headlands School. The atmosphere around school is far calmer and more purposeful than was the case at the first monitoring visit. Senior leaders understand that the sustainability of these improvements is vital.

Greater responsibility for the quality of provision has been delegated to middle leaders. Senior leaders need to ensure that consistency is achieved in the way in which subject leaders discharge their responsibilities so that good practice is shared more widely.

The specialist subjects continue to make some input to whole-school development, but links with partner schools are limited. The school's data on standards in the specialist status subjects of science and mathematics suggest that results at age 16 are likely to be better this year than in 2008. The uptake of courses and additional provision, for instance with the GCSE course in statistics, are consistent with the specialist college commitments. Teaching in science is satisfactory overall. In the science rooms and elsewhere, opportunities to present the subject as a fresh and vibrant area of learning are missed. In discussion, students express limited enthusiasm for science. The school is aware that there is scope to make more of its specialist college status.

The acting headteacher knows the school well and his plans and priorities provide a clear direction for further development. His actions, though not always popular have won the respect and confidence of staff. With this has evolved a change in culture whereby staff demonstrate a collective commitment to meet the challenges that remain.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – good

External support

The partnership with South Hunsley School continues to provide very effective support in building the capacity of both personnel and systems at Headlands School. The local authority continues to provide regular support to core subject departments. An intensive progress review conducted by the local authority in June as part of a continuing programme of challenge and support has provided the school with a helpful summary of strengths and weaknesses together with appropriate recommendations. Proposals to establish collaborative working between post-16 providers to create a wider choice of study pathways have not been fully realised. While meetings with senior local authority officers and senior managers of the school are imminent, opportunities have been missed at a strategic level to facilitate effective partnership working through a common post-16 timetable across the locality.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that leadership and management at subject level is sufficiently rigorous to achieve consistency in the application of best practice.
- Ensure that robust systems are established for monitoring academic progress, providing academic support and developing independent learning skills in the sixth form.