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Mr Martin Burgess
Headteacher
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Lancashire
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Dear Mr Burgess

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Shuttleworth College

Following my visit with Terry McDermott and Anthony Pearson, Additional Inspectors to your college on 11 and 12 March 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the college 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 – 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, Standards and Inclusion for Lancashire County Council.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Shuttleworth College

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 11–12 March 2009.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the college's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of students, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Staffing continues to be unstable this term, there has been much long-term illness and some of the newly appointed staff from overseas left the college after a short stay. Many posts are still covered by long- and short-term supply teachers. A director of mathematics has been appointed and is due to take up the post after Easter. A newly appointed head of religious education is due to start in June. The college now has a National Challenge adviser and a new LA college adviser took up the role since the last inspection. On 10 March 2009 ministerial approval was given for the formation of the Burnley Learning Partnership Community Trust of which the college will be a part.

Achievement and standards

Many students have still not overcome a legacy of underachievement and although tracking data shows that standards are beginning to rise slowly, predicted results for GCSE and Year 9 assessments are still well below challenging targets. Taking into account coursework already marked, modules already assessed and teachers' assessment, the proportion of Year 11 students on track to gain a C grade or higher is set to improve in English and mathematics, as is the proportion likely to gain five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics. College leaders predict that final results are likely to be closer to the national floor target of 30% but are still a long way off the challenging target of 46%. Year 11 students are making better progress in information and communication technology, business studies and resistant materials and are in a stronger position to meet their targets. In Year 9, standards in English, mathematics and science are a little higher than at this time last year.

In most subjects in all year groups, girls outperform boys and girls are not as far behind their targets as the boys are behind theirs, except mathematics at GCSE where boys are closer to their target than the girls.

Where teaching has improved and is at least good there are signs of accelerating progress. In the best lessons students are fully engaged and keen to do well and they rise to the high expectations of teachers. Progress, however, is still hindered by instability in staffing and some inadequate teaching. The poor attendance of a significant minority of students continues to be a major factor in their underachievement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Increase significantly the rate of students' progress to raise standards – inadequate

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour in and around the college site continues to be satisfactory helped by the layout of the new building which aids effective supervision. As the weather improves, more students are taking advantage of the outdoor social and games facilities which reduces pressure on the indoor accommodation. Behaviour outdoors at break and lunchtime tends to be good.

In lessons, behaviour and attitudes to work continue to be generally satisfactory and closely reflect the quality of learning. Effective teaching encourages good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning but there is still not enough good teaching to promote consistently good behaviour and attitudes. College leaders continue to work hard to promote good behaviour and are assiduous in evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies used, such as the well-devised and implemented 'Behaviour Hot Spot Timetable' that deploys teaching assistants strategically. While the college recognises that it still needs to reduce the exclusion rate, there have been no permanent exclusions since the last monitoring visit and the overall number of students being excluded has reduced.

Attendance figures are still below the college target level. Although there has been some success in reducing the number of persistent absentees, the overall proportion of such students has not significantly fallen because many of the students moving into the college at various points during the academic year are persistent non-attenders themselves. Although attendance figures compare well with those in other local schools, staff continue to ensure that improving attendance is given a high priority, a fact recognised by the students themselves. The 'Student Support Panel' has been particularly effective in improving the attendance of individual students. Newer initiatives such as the introduction of attendance panels, rewards for good attendance and a concern to make it an integral part of the college culture have not yet been in place long enough to have a significant positive impact. The college also recognises that, despite some modest improvement, for example in reducing the amount of lateness by students driven to college by parents; it needs to further reduce the proportion of students who arrive late for the start of the college day.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Continue to improve students' attendance and behaviour – satisfactory

Quality of provision

About half of the 32 lessons seen were good or better and more examples of outstanding practice were observed than on previous visits. Students are very clear in their view that teaching is improving. However, there remains inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning, and this slows the overall progress students make.

The best lessons are characterised by challenging teaching which sets a range of short sharp and relevant tasks. These lessons encourage students to think for themselves, at the very limits at what they already know or can do. Students are interested and motivated to work independently, and the pace of their learning accelerates as they become fully involved in their work. They like this way of learning, and this is reflected in the good relations between teachers and students in these lessons. They sustain their concentration for significant periods of time. These strong features are apparent in both higher and lower attaining groups, and with students of different ages. They ensure that progress in these lessons is good or better. A small number of inadequate lessons were seen. Management of pupils' behaviour was ineffective, pupils' attitudes were poor and the work set did not always match students' needs well enough. Consequently, behaviour was unacceptable and not enough learning took place.

Inspectors agree with recent monitoring by senior leaders that revealed that the quality of marking is inconsistent. In the best cases, where teachers have adopted a recently introduced college policy for marking, they mark students work regularly and students know what they have done well, 'three stars', and what they need to do next to improve, 'a wish'. It is not clear how pupils should respond to teachers' comments and they rarely correct their work as a result of the comments. In too many books, marking is cursory and gives students little guidance on what to do next to move forward.

The teaching of basic skills in literacy is a clear priority for the college. Staff have taken on board with enthusiasm recent training to improve their skills in this area. They are now able to identify accurately those students with weaker literacy skills, and are beginning to target support where it is most needed. The full impact of this work on improving standards has yet to be seen.

The college is becoming more confident in its capacity to make effective use of assessment data to identify and tackle underachievement. This is evident in recently devised and implemented strategies. For example, the wealth of assessment information now available is used to identify older students at risk of underachieving, particularly but not exclusively in relation to the national benchmark of five good passes in the GCSE. These students are interviewed by an 'Achievement Panel' comprising senior college managers, and an agreed programme of booster classes and other support is created to meet individual students' needs. A significantly positive feature of the panel's work, which is also recognised and appreciated by the

students themselves, is the way in which the interviews are used to raise aspirations, for example about routes into higher education and career intentions. This well devised initiative has improved the motivation and attendance of a number of students markedly, although it has not been in place long enough to have a discernable effect on raising standards and achievement.

Progress leaders are becoming more adept at using assessment information and other information generated through the pastoral support system to help identify students throughout the college who may be falling behind in their work or be vulnerable in other respects. The 'Student Support Panel' is an example of how proactive the college is in using all they know about individual students to ensure they receive appropriate interventions and support. The success of the recent student review day, where every pupil had an interview with their form tutor to identify strengths and targets for improvement, was in part due to the effective use of the available assessment information. While assessment information continues to be used well by senior managers and subject leaders to set challenging targets for all students and to monitor their progress, its use in the classroom to inform lesson planning so that all groups are consistently well challenged is inconsistent.

The college has been proactive, and very quick to move on improving the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The hardworking and dedicated inclusion team has rapidly put into a place a well organised system for offering support to meet the wide spectrum of needs of students in the college. The inclusion team has quickly gained the confidence of students and other staff. Staff know how to refer students who they feel are at risk of underachievement, and students know how to self-refer confidentially if they feel they need help. Although only very recently fully functional, the system has already begun to demonstrate its effects on the small number who have accessed it. The information generated in individual education programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not yet used effectively to set and plan the next stages of learning in all lessons across the college.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Eliminate unsatisfactory teaching and increase the proportion that is good – satisfactory
- Use assessment data consistently across the college to identify and tackle underachievement – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The headteacher continues to provide a strong lead and is determinedly driving through improvements. Senior and middle leaders share his determination and are confident in their ability to bring about improvements. Senior and middle leaders are made accountable for their areas of responsibility and the line management of middle leaders is particularly effective in ensuring exacting accountability. Leaders have developed confidence in their monitoring and evaluation skills and rigorous

whole-college systems to monitor students' performance and the quality of provision are securely embedded at senior and middle leader level. The close monitoring of students' progress by heads of department provides the information needed to target support towards individual students and recognise and close gaps in learning that is helping to accelerate progress. Monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leader and middle leaders is increasingly rigorous and leading to well focused professional development and support for staff that is helping to improve the quality of learning and teaching. As systems to evaluate the effectiveness of the college's work strengthen, senior and middle leaders have contributed to the college's self-evaluation form as part of the college's developing cycle of college improvement.

A small group of governors have benefited from training and are developing the knowledge and skills to become increasingly effective in supporting the work of the college. They are well informed by senior leaders and more able to ask searching questions of the leadership, for example, on the new attendance policy. They have a positive and open relationship with senior leaders and have appreciated the level of discussion and consultation with them. Other governors have had more limited involvement in the work of the college.

The college improvement plan was derived from the original LA action plan. It is helping to drive forward college improvement and is continually updated to ensure the right priorities are tackled. The plan sets out clear success criteria relating to students' achievement and personal development that are monitored closely by senior leaders and governors. A recently developed Raising Achievement Plan devised as part of the National Challenge Initiative is soon to be merged into the college improvement plan to form one working document.

The college has made satisfactory progress in ensuring statutory requirements are met. The statutory curriculum requirements for information and communication technology and physical education are due to be fulfilled when changes are made to the curriculum and the school day part way through the summer term. Since the previous visit, a working group has been set up by the governors to develop and maintain the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The requirement to promote community cohesion is not yet fully in place and a school profile has not yet been produced.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Identify clear success criteria in college improvement plans – satisfactory
- Improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation to assess accurately the impact of actions taken on students' learning and personal development – good
- Ensure all statutory requirements are fully in place – satisfactory

External support

The LA continues to provide a good level of effective support through the work of the learning and teaching coach, consultants and advisory teachers. A number of staff have benefited from personalised guidance provided by the LA coach and consultants and as a result have been taken off intensive support programmes. The coach has successfully prepared a number of staff to become teaching and learning coaches. Consequently the college is becoming more confident in providing its own support and professional development to support improvements in learning and teaching. Overall the support provided by the LA is helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A recent monitoring visit by the monitoring and intervention adviser and the newly appointed school adviser supported the view that the college is making satisfactory progress overall.

The college is benefiting from National Challenge funding, especially in providing funding for the employment of the teaching and learning coach, an additional teaching assistant in mathematics and science and a family worker, and for ensuring sufficient funding to attract a well qualified and experienced director of mathematics. The National Challenge adviser has visited the school and advised on the Raising Achievement Plan.

Priority for further improvement

- Use the information generated in individual education programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities more effectively to set and plan the next stages of learning for students in all lessons across the college