

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment
Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

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

Direct T 01695 566932
Direct F 01695 729320
hcarnall@cfbt.com



5 February 2009

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 Robert Jones and Ross Parker, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 3 and 4 February 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon
H M Inspector



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Special measures: monitoring of Risedale Sports and Community College

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 February 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the college's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive principal; the assistant principal; members of the school's senior leadership team; two members of the parents' forum; a number of heads of faculty; groups of students; a representative from the local authority (LA) and the National Challenge partner.

Context

The college has operated as a 'soft' federation with Northallerton College since September 2008 and is led by the headteacher of that college as executive principal. Risedale College is governed by an interim executive board. The day-to-day running of the college is the responsibility of the assistant principal, seconded from Northallerton College. Risedale College will form part of a 'hard' federation with Northallerton College, to begin in September 2009.

Achievement and standards

Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning are helping students catch up on the gaps in their prior knowledge. However, the progress made by students is not currently sufficient to overcome the legacy of past underachievement.

College leaders are developing a more accurate picture of the progress made by different groups of students although some inconsistencies remain. Current assessment information suggests that Year 9 students are on track to attain standards in mathematics that are close to the national average by the end of the year. Science results are also expected to be higher than they were, but standards in English are expected to be similar to the very low standards achieved in the 2007 attainment tests. The college is also confident that GCSE results will improve in summer 2009. Early entry results in November for Year 11 English Language GCSE are already higher than the results the college obtained in summer 2008, though these had been exceptionally low. GCSE mathematics results are also predicted to rise in summer 2009. Furthermore, the introduction of additional opportunities to gain Level 2 qualifications is likely to lead to an increase in the proportion of students who gain five good passes at GCSE.

In lessons, teachers are working hard to enable students to understand what the different grades and levels require. At the moment students are hesitant to identify aspects of the criteria for success that they do not fully understand because they

have not been accustomed to taking this responsibility. Students make better progress where they receive extensive support from teachers.

Standards in the specialist subject of physical education are low and the impact of the specialism on raising standards remains inadequate. However, since a new leader of specialism was appointed in November 2008 some good moves have been made to raise the profile of sport in the college and to promote links with the community. For example, the range of sports, sports courses and leadership opportunities for young people has increased and the number of students involved in sports has risen.

Progress since the last inspection visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and achievement at both key stages – inadequate

Personal development and well-being

Students' behaviour remains satisfactory. The great majority of students are cooperative in lessons, though they do not yet regularly take responsibility for their own conduct or their learning. Students say that lessons are quieter now and, as a result, more enjoyable. Teachers still exclude a large number of students from lessons, but this has reduced significantly. Senior staff increasingly visit lessons to deal with low-level disruption before it disrupts learning. Because lessons are more enjoyable, students lose concentration less often and so are able to make better progress.

Students' attendance has been sustained at a level which is in line with schools in similar circumstances. Although attendance in Years 9 and 11 continues to lag behind that in other years, the difference is now slight. This is because the school has established a consistent approach to monitoring and responding to absence. Good attendance is highlighted and rewarded and students are highly aware of the school's policy. The support provided to students who have poor attendance records is equally consistent. As result, the number of persistent absentees has fallen. Fewer students are being excluded from the college because good support is being provided for those whom the college identifies as being at risk of exclusion.

Progress since the last inspection visit on the area for improvement:

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

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has continued to improve since the last monitoring visit. The college's own evaluation from lesson observations is that

approximately half of lessons are good or better. Inspectors observed a number of lessons and agree that the college's judgement is accurate.

Assessment systems have improved since the last monitoring visit. Assessments are becoming more secure and provide better information about students' progress. Teachers' planning for lessons has improved overall and teachers are better at trying to meet the range of students' needs. Some teachers are using information about students' additional learning needs to help them plan lessons. However, this information about individual learners' needs is not consistently used by all teachers.

As a result of the college's emphasis on improving teaching and learning the majority of teachers now display a wider range of teaching skills on a more consistent basis. Lessons are generally well planned, with a variety of tasks and clear learning objectives. As a result students are more aware of what they should do to improve. The time allocated to more challenging tasks is also more appropriate than it had been at the last inspection visit and so there are fewer occasions when students get frustrated or bored. However, sometimes, teachers are not explicit enough about what each student is expected to learn by the end of the lesson and do not check on their learning sufficiently.

Teachers are beginning to offer more opportunities for students to work in groups and to discuss their learning so that they understand it more fully. Students have had little experience of working in groups previously and are currently hesitant when these opportunities are offered. In the best lessons teachers use praise very carefully so that students feel that their contributions are really valued. They use questioning effectively to challenge students and to check how well they are learning. The balance of input between teachers and students is being successfully addressed: teachers talk less than had been previously noted and use a range of tasks to engage and motivate learners. Teachers make good use of animations and images on interactive whiteboards to engage the learners and maintain a good pace in lessons.

There has been a strong drive to improve students' literacy. In most lessons teachers are identifying key words and are better aware of students' reading ages and the way these might be barriers to learning.

The college has introduced a coherent tracking system which is enabling teachers and students to see how well students are progressing. This is updated every five weeks and enables managers to predict the likely results of tests and examinations more accurately. Managers are more able to identify subjects and classes where performance is not as strong as it should be so that they can make changes to the provision. Individual students who are not making the progress that they should are more easily identified, so that additional support can be provided to help them catch up. Managers are using this information to adjust teaching groups and the focus of teaching in some classes to address identified under-performance.

These tracking systems are now firmly established and all teachers understand how they are used. However, there is still some inconsistency in the accuracy of the assessment data that some teachers are providing on assessments. The college is working to improve this. For example, senior staff provide support in comparing students' work, using links with the partner school to provide benchmarks for teachers to help them to assess work more accurately.

Students say that the feedback they are getting is much more helpful than it was before this system was established. Marking is also better, though not all students understand that the emphasis has shifted from regular, often superficial marking to less frequent, more detailed analysis with useful guidance on how to improve. They appreciate an increased use of peer assessment which helps them to understand the steps they need to make to move from one grade or level to the next.

The physical education department has led useful staff development sessions to share expertise in record-keeping; the use of information and communication technology in lessons; and the importance of pace and challenge in successful lessons. In this way, the specialist subject is making a satisfactory contribution to improving teaching and learning overall.

Progress since the last inspection visit on the areas for improvement:

- 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 – good

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers have continued to drive forward improvements energetically, with a very focused series of action plans, regularly updated to reflect the assessments of students' progress. Plans clearly indicate what is to be done, by when, and who is responsible. The college's analysis of how effective these actions have been is good, thorough and supported by evidence. It shows that standards have already begun to rise. The college's targets have been adjusted to reflect this, to be realistic and achievable. The college has made satisfactory or good progress on nearly all the points for improvement since the last monitoring inspection.

A good start has been made to introducing a programme aimed at improving students' literacy levels. Within the core subjects of mathematics and English there is some evidence that standards in these subjects are better than they were at the time the college was placed in a category of concern. However, standards are not yet where they should be. Although the college's data systems are providing a fuller, more reliable picture of how well students are progressing, some inconsistencies

remain. The college's analysis of progress does not show sufficiently well how students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, nor those for whom English is an additional language are progressing. This is not monitored across the range of lessons and so the college cannot demonstrate what works well and what does not. It cannot say whether all students' needs are being met in full, nor whether there might be any link between students' needs and behaviour patterns. There is no cohesive, strategic overview of this. The college acknowledges this and has begun to explore how this might be more urgently improved.

Leaders and managers continue to pay good attention to the development of teachers' skills and to draw on external advice and support, including from the partner school, for core subjects. The recently introduced literacy programme is already beginning to have a positive impact. This is because there had been a good period of planning beforehand to establish the right priorities, to train staff and to get a good number of different subject teachers involved in leading this drive.

The confidence and skills of the middle managers have grown. All subject department leaders now conduct regular, formal self-evaluation and require far less support from senior managers to do this. Middle managers are increasingly able to monitor accurately and systematically the quality of teaching within their subject area. This is helping to encourage the sharing of good practice amongst teachers.

Progress since the last inspection visit on the area for improvement:

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

External support

The LA provides good support to the college, particularly to strengthen leadership, through seconded leadership from the partner college. Support for the core subjects of English and mathematics has been welcomed by the college and has helped to develop teachers' confidence and expertise. Recently the LA has allocated additional resources and staffing to help promote literacy. The main focus is on improving students' reading ages as this is key to their progress in a range of subjects.

In late October 2008 a National Challenge adviser was appointed to assist the college. The adviser works independently alongside the LA, focusing principally on raising standards in English and mathematics. The college and LA have wisely agreed that the National Challenge adviser's role will include coordinating the various sources of support being provided to the college. In this way duplication of work is avoided, action plans link up together and everyone is clear about what their responsibilities are in making these happen. The National Challenge adviser is providing good support and challenge to the college.

Priorities for further improvement

- Coordinate the data and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those for whom English is an additional language, so that their progress can be more systematically monitored and the impact of provision for them can be analysed.