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19 June 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 Judy Jones and Bernard Jones, additional inspectors, to your school on 17 and 18 June 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 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 (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 third monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 June 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; a number of heads of faculty; groups of students; a member of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and representatives from the local authority.

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 IEB. The day-to-day running of the college is the responsibility of the assistant principal, seconded from Northallerton College. A 'hard federation' formalising these arrangements and providing the governance begins in September 2009. The arrangements for how this will operate are well underway.

An assistant principal with responsibility for mathematics was appointed in April 2009.

Achievement and standards

Standards remain well below the national average and students do not all achieve as well as they should. However, the college continues to improve. Progress in lessons is often good, as teaching has improved, helping students to catch up to where they should be and there is a good programme for intervention where this is not the case.

The results of GCSE examinations already taken by Year 11 students provide encouraging evidence of improving standards. Half of Year 11 students have additional qualifications at Level 2 in numeracy and literacy. The college awaits the results from the summer 2009 GCSE examinations as an indication that this rising trend is sustainable over time.

The results of recent tests taken by Year 9 students and marked in school indicate that standards have risen compared to results in 2008. Although still well below national expectations, a greater proportion of students gained above average levels in English than in 2008, and boys' attainment is also noticeably higher.

In the college's specialist subject of physical education, standards, though low, are now rising, following the introduction of a more appropriate vocationally orientated curriculum. The specialist subject is making a satisfactory contribution to raising standards in the school overall. Verified results in the Business and Technology

Education Council (BTEC) course will impact positively on the overall proportion of GCSE grades in the school. The profile of sport within the college and in the community has increased. There is a wider range of sports, sports courses and leadership opportunities for young people and the number of students involved in sport locally has risen. Links are being made with other subjects, for example, by replicating the physical education leadership awards system in English and in modern foreign languages.

To further its community specialism the college has embarked on a new venture to promote literacy in the wider community amongst families and linked to one of its feeder primary schools.

Though there are promising signs of improvement in provision, the outcomes for students in terms of their standards and achievement are not yet sufficiently secure to be able to judge that this improvement is satisfactory overall.

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 in lessons is good because they are involved and interested in their lessons. The impact of a new integrated system for student support and development is being closely monitored. Data indicate fewer disruptions to lessons than previously and the number of students excluded from lessons has dropped by around half. Behaviour around the college, particularly at lunchtime is still too boisterous because there are too few planned activities at this time. The college is tackling this by preparing a social base for Years 10 and 11 and by looking to use Year 11 sports leaders to provide more lunchtime sports for younger students. It is intended that this will also enable students to develop more leadership skills.

Teachers help Nepalese students to take an active part in lessons and relationships between different cultural groups are good. The school monitors the involvement of minority groups and has taken action to increase participation. At present, the different groups are well disposed to each other but do not have enough knowledge of each other's backgrounds and traditions.

Students are less engaged in the life of the college than in their lessons. The school council is not yet sufficiently well established to be an effective vehicle for communication between students and college leaders. Consequently, students often do not know who their representatives are, and do not feel they have a say in what happens in the college.

The college is making good progress in improving attendance, particularly of those students who persistently do not attend. This is the result of consistent, well

targeted support and more enjoyable learning experiences. The attendance of Year 9 students is now only one percentage point below that of students in other years. The college's figures show that attendance is now in line with national averages.

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

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

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning have continued to improve since the last monitoring visit. Inspectors observed some outstanding teaching and a greater proportion of good teaching. There has been an appropriate focus on raising the expectations of teachers and students about what can be achieved.

Teachers manage their classes effectively and use the reward system well to encourage students to behave positively. This has led to an improvement in students' attitudes to learning and in their behaviour. Good behaviour management ensures that there is normally a good working atmosphere in lessons. This enables teachers to use a wider range of teaching styles to make learning more active and enjoyable. Typically, students are given the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups and so become more involved in contributing to the learning taking place. In these situations, students cooperate well and gain a great deal from collaborative learning.

Students have a better grasp of the criteria for success in examinations than at the time of the previous monitoring visit. They are increasingly taking responsibility for their own learning, through group work. This is a more routine aspect of lessons now and students are more confident in working in this way. Students' independence is growing, but some teachers still miss opportunities to promote this, for example, to teach pupils how to report the results of their discussions using a subject's key words. Occasionally, there is an undercurrent of distracting talk when students are not being sufficiently challenged.

The drive to improve students' literacy is having a positive impact. Teachers ensure that texts and worksheets are accessible to all students, including those with learning difficulties. In this way, potential barriers to learning are overcome. However, opportunities to develop students' speaking and listening skills are too often missed. There is some good practice, for example in English, and information and communication technology lessons, where students benefit from listening carefully to each others' answers and build up their confidence and self-esteem by successfully sharing their ideas.

The use of assessment has improved significantly overall. Systems to track students' progress are firmly established. Information about students' levels is readily accessible to teachers and students because the computer-based system for recording performance has developed well. Teachers' assessments are more

accurate than previously and so target-setting is more precise and realistic. All teachers understand how the systems work and use them accurately. Students describe these targets as helping to motivate them and are pleased when rewarded on reaching their next target. The system is helping to raise students' aspirations. It identifies any potential underachievement quickly and interventions are put into place to support the student. The progress of vulnerable students is carefully charted. Follow-up reviews ensure that interventions have had a positive impact.

Teachers' planning for lessons has improved. They use a common approach that encourages a clear and logical structure to promote students' learning. However, lesson plans often do not make it sufficiently clear what teachers expect different ability groups to learn during the lesson. For example, in mixed-ability classes, more able students are not always sufficiently challenged.

The programme aimed at improving students' literacy levels is having a positive impact. There is more widespread evidence of literacy skills being developed across the curriculum. For example, in a drama lesson lower ability students' reading skills were reinforced through scenario cue cards as they prepared their presentations and they had key questions on display around the drama studio to prompt them.

Progress since the last inspection visit on the area 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 – good
- Ensure that target-setting is sufficiently rigorous in order to identify accurately students likely to underachieve – good

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers continue to tackle the areas for improvement vigorously. Standards have begun to rise. The college has made good progress on all but one of the points for improvement since the last monitoring inspection.

At the time of the previous monitoring inspection the college was asked to review the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Swift and effective progress has been made on this point. The college has introduced a more integrated approach to how all students are supported and enabled to learn, bringing this together with other aspects of the pastoral system. As a result, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Teachers are aware of individual pupils' needs in the lessons. There are effective systems to track students' progress. These demonstrate that the provision is making a difference.

College leaders continue to draw widely on the well established link with Northallerton College to disseminate good practice and further develop teachers'

skills. New links, for example with another specialist sports college, are enhancing support and advice.

Middle leaders continue to develop their skills and confidence in monitoring and evaluation. They have benefited from good management training and mentoring. Subject leaders conduct regular, frequent lesson observations and reviews of students' books and share the outcomes of these with colleagues. They use data about students' progress in departmental planning. In English, responsibility is being devolved effectively to colleagues and lesson planning explicitly addresses the needs of all learners. However, this good practice is not sufficiently widespread.

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 external support for the college remains good. Good quality external advice and support from local authority advisers and subject consultants, for example for mathematics, and from the partner school have continued to enhance the quality of provision. The federation fosters staff development and the professionalism of the teachers well, through building these links with other schools. The local authority is providing good support to the college's drive to improve literacy. The school has secured additional funding to promote literacy further in the community.

The IEB provides good support and challenge to the college. It is well informed through fortnightly meetings and full briefings from the college leaders. Arrangements are in place for the smooth transfer to hard federation in September 2009. These include governance, staffing structure and systems for monitoring to maintain the pace of improvement.

Good working relationships between the local authority and the National Challenge partner have built up an atmosphere of trust in decision making. This arrangement is proving very effective in helping the college move forward.