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Mr. Neville Coles
Principal
Priory Community School
Queensway
Weston-super-Mare
BS22 6BP

Dear Mr. Coles,

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Moving through the system

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Wednesday 11th March and the morning of Thursday 12th March to look at work on developing the future economic well-being of students in your school and careers education. I also looked at how well arrangements are made to support students during their transition into secondary school.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included:

- an analysis of a significant amount of written information that you provided both before and during my visit
- discussions with you and 11 senior managers, your Connexions personal advisers, members of staff of Weston College and representatives from business and commerce
- visits to different parts of your tutor programme and four lessons that built economic understanding
- discussions with students in years 7, 9, and 11 who gave me their views about their progress into and through the school, the programmes they are on, the progress they are making in your school and their aspirations for further study and employment.

Overall, your work in developing the future economic well-being of students in your school is good with some outstanding aspects. The steps that you have taken show your commitment to raising standards, particularly in English and mathematics, and ensuring the improvement for all of your students in this year's examinations. Your strategies for setting targets and regularly reviewing students' progress, not just in their academic work but their personal skills and attitudes to learning, is a model of good practice. This process celebrates student's progress made so far and sets challenging targets to further improve attitudes and



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standards. Students recognise the commitment that their teachers have for their well-being and progress. The relationship between students and staff is outstanding.

The development of students' self-confidence and strong team-working skills is a feature of the schools' teaching and learning strategies. From the beginning of Year 7, students develop study skills and become better and more effective learners. The richness and relevance of the curriculum improves opportunities and challenges students to do even better. This is demonstrated by their initiative and involvement in the classroom and in other activities outside. Older students make good progress in their financial literacy, and very good progress in their understanding of their career options. Through their work experience and the many other contacts with employers, older students also develop a good appreciation of the skills and attributes necessary for success in the workplace.

Features of effective practice:

- The school uses its specialist status as a technology college to offer opportunities to the feeder primary schools to engage younger pupils into the world of science, technology and mathematics. The primary schools also access a range of other areas that the school provides. Pupils are encouraged to visit the school through a range of activities, which prepares them for transfer from their primary school. The visits by staff and senior managers to the primary schools also aid this process. Students recognise the quality of their transition into the school.
- The timetable is suspended at regular periods throughout the year so that all students can undertake extended projects and visits that provide them with a developing understanding of the world of work. For example, each year undertakes a visit that explores an area and traditional employment, like the Rhondda valley for Year 7 students. In school, there are enterprise activities that improve group working skills and assist in the preparation for adult life.
- The wide range of support and guidance equips the students for the decisions that they take when they choose their options both in year 8 and 9 and for the pathways when they leave school. Students speak of the outstanding help they get and recognise the care and effort teachers and support staff give to ensure they achieve well.
- The vast majority of students benefit from work experience. Other students, as part of their option choice, spend time gaining experience of the world of work and receive high quality training, for example, in hairdressing. Others go on link courses with the local college and develop skills for of the world of work. This area is very well planned and managed.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum offers alternative pathways that allow students to follow vocational and academic courses. The outstanding careers education and guidance is conscientiously covered and all partners share a commitment to ensure that students receive the best quality impartial advice and support. This enables them to make wise choices based on their interests and capabilities and enormous care is taken to ensure students progress appropriately.

Areas for further improvement, which we discussed, include:

- Further support to improve standards in English and mathematics by integrating numeracy and literacy skills across the curriculum, especially in areas linked to the world of work.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop economic well-being in the school.

As I explained, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Lyons,
Additional inspector