

Prospects Learning Services Ltd
Prospects House
19 Elmfield Road
Bromley, Kent
BR1 1LT

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

Direct T 020 8315 1250
Direct F 020 8315 1279
Mary.Massey@ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Chris Kelly
Chamberlayne College for the Arts
Tickleford Drive
Weston
Southampton
SO19 9QP

Dear Mrs Kelly

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 July 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the teaching and support staff and to students who gave up their time to talk to me. I would like to pass on special thanks to those students who cooked my lunch.

Since the last inspection, one of the deputy headteachers has been seconded temporarily to the acting headship of a local junior school.

As a result of the inspection on 9 and 10 January 2008, the school was asked to:

- enable teachers to plan work which more closely matches students' prior learning and so raise standards
- achieve greater consistency in the effective leadership and management of middle managers
- improve the behaviour of a minority of students by ensuring that behaviour-management procedures are applied in all lessons.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Since the last inspection, the rate of students' progress and the standards they achieve have improved substantially. Current data, based on teachers' assessments and module test scores, show that the rate of improvement is likely to be sufficient for the school to reach the minimum standards expected for five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, in 2009. This rising trend is supported by even more progress shown by the current Year 10. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are also making better progress but not as much as those on the C/D borderline. At Key Stage 3 progress is more limited. The current focus in Years 7, 8

and 9 is on raising literacy and numeracy skills for those students who come in with well below average skills in Year 7.

The improvements in progress and standards have been achieved as result of a comprehensive intervention programme. Data are now analysed well to identify those students who are at risk of underachieving. Personalised and targeted support is put in place for them, using both teaching and support staff, with work well matched to students' needs. The school reports a much more ambitious and confident culture among students, particularly those sitting examinations this summer, demonstrated by the very high uptake of extra revision sessions for GCSE, and 100% attendance at examinations. More parents are now involved in supporting their children's learning, and an increased intake for next year indicates that the school's profile in the local community is improving.

Students feel very loyal to their school and are particularly proud of the recent award for their anti-bullying work. Their positive attitudes are reflected in greatly increased attendance since the last inspection. They believe that teachers want them to do well and are prepared to support them. Some described aspirations that they would not have considered even a year ago. One said, 'I'm sure now that I can get there.' The school's performing arts specialist status has a positive effect on students' self-confidence, with many involved in the school production, which was being performed for primary school children during the monitoring visit. Students talked about how much they enjoyed lessons in music, drama, dance and art, because the teaching allowed them to be actively involved and to take responsibility for their own learning. They say that they learn really well in the lessons where the teacher is enthusiastic and the work is accessible, relevant and well explained. In lessons where they are more passive and the work is less stimulating, they are easily bored and some students do not behave well. However, they report that, overall, behaviour has improved greatly since the last inspection and they really appreciate the new approach where teachers 'listen more and don't shout'. The number of exclusions has decreased and, while they are not yet entirely consistent, systems for managing behaviour are more robust. There is a comprehensive reward system but students do not feel that it is consistently or fairly applied and, in some lessons seen during the visit, criticism of students was more frequent than praise. Students' exercise books do not yet show that they are taking pride in their written work or that it is valued by teachers. Marking is inconsistent, although students report that there is good oral feedback from teachers. They say they feel frustrated that homework is often not marked.

Learning support assistants have been trained well by English and mathematics heads of department, and have also been involved with the whole staff in using restorative justice techniques, so they are increasingly skilled at managing students with challenging behaviour. Some have completed GCSE examinations in English and mathematics in order to increase their skills. As well as providing support in classrooms, they hold both individual and small-group sessions for some of the high proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The intervention programme tackles the needs of some of the most vulnerable and borderline



students, but there are still others who are underachieving. In the lessons seen during the visit, the most effective teachers provided appropriate differentiation. However, the quality of teaching is variable, and not all teachers are taking enough responsibility for providing work that matches students' needs, and do not always recognise that even in a class that is set rather than mixed-ability, students will have varying learning needs. Individual education plans for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are available for teachers of all subjects, but they do not always provide specific strategies that can be used in every classroom, for example to develop literacy skills. Early work has been done to generate a common language for learning and to help teachers to realise that taking more risks in the classroom will engage students better and raise standards further.

There have been some significant changes in staffing, which is now much more stable. Morale among both teaching and support staff is rising as results improve and they have a sense of pulling together with a common sense of purpose. Professional development for all staff has been a recent priority and has increased staff skills. Middle managers are now more accountable and feel responsible for standards and progress in their departments. They produce an annual self-evaluation and identify areas for development. Although there is a more consistent approach since the last inspection, the new systems have not yet had time to embed fully. The recent progress demonstrates that the leadership of the school has identified the priorities for development correctly and that the school now has the capacity to sustain a faster pace of improvement.

Support from the local authority through the National Challenge Adviser, who is also the School Improvement Partner, has been good and has successfully assisted the school in improving standards.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mary Massey
Her Majesty's Inspector