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Mr Martin Burgess
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Burgess

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Shuttleworth College

Following my visit with Christine Emerson, Mary Liptrot and Graham Loach, additional inspectors, to your college on 07 and 08 December 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth 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.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Gill Salter-Smith
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Shuttleworth College

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 07 and 08 December 2009

Evidence

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

Context

The college is a National Challenge Trust School and became part of the Burnley Education Trust in September 2009. A reconstituted governing body was formed with a majority appointed by Burnley Education Trust.

Staffing difficulties persist with a number of teaching staff on long-term absence. Six posts are covered by short-term and longer-term supply staff. A number of new staff including five newly qualified teachers joined the college in September.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The 2009 provisional results for GCSE show that attainment remains low. The college's result of 23% for students achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics did not meet its own targets or the national floor target of 30%. The result of 33% for students achieving five or more A* to C grades fell short of the challenging college target of 45% although overall the gap between targets and actual results was narrower in 2009 than it was in 2008. The total average points score was lower than in previous years partly because the college deliberately reduced the number of examination entries for some students to enable them to focus on fewer subjects. Results in business studies, French, information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology were much improved on the previous year.

The lack of consistency in students' progress continues to be a concern. Although some progress was made by many students during Year 11 from a low starting point at the start of the year, it was still not sufficient to enable them to overcome a legacy of underachievement. Many students narrowly missed their target grades. The rate of progress was better than the previous year with more students making two or more levels progress in English from the end of Year 9 to GCSE, than expected. However, in mathematics, fewer students than expected made this amount of progress. Significant staffing difficulties disrupted progress for some classes in mathematics. Poor attendance continues to be a major factor affecting attainment and progress. Where students engaged with the improving college ethos and took advantage of the various interventions provided they achieved their

targets. The proportion of A* to A grades at GCSE has increased, with the best performing ten students achieving similarly to top performers in other local schools.

The college's tracking data shows that learning and progress of students currently in the college continues to be inconsistent. In Years 10 and 11, underachievement is still evident, often because of continued poor attendance and, in mathematics, a history of staffing difficulties. Compared to the previous year a slightly higher proportion of students are on track to achieve five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics in 2010. In Key Stage 3, college data shows that progress is accelerating, particularly in mathematics. However, there is still underachievement in this key stage, particularly for students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities and those eligible for free school meals.

The quality of learning and the rate of progress in lessons also remain inconsistent. Where teaching has improved significantly, students respond well to high expectations and challenging activities, and they concentrate well on tasks. A clear focus across the college on improving learning skills is developing students' confidence in their own ability to learn. In history, for example, students have produced well researched projects. In a leisure and tourism lesson, students worked effectively in groups to plan a sporting event. However, there remains a significant minority of lessons where teaching is not demanding enough of students and they are not fully engaged. This slows their progress considerably.

Although both boys and girls underperformed in 2009 GCSE examinations, the gap between them is closing, with girls catching up on boys. For the first time this year girls outperformed boys in most subjects. With the exception of students with a statement of need who exceeded their targets, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those eligible for free school meals continued to perform below their targets. The gap between targets and actual results for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities was smaller in 2009 compared with 2008, but widened for students eligible for free school meals.

In 2009, the attainment of Year 9 students remained low in core subjects of English, mathematics and science, although there is a rising trend. Challenging targets for these students were not met but the gap between targets and attainment closed compared with the previous year. Improvement in the percentage of students reaching the expected National Curriculum Level 5 or higher was most significant in English, science and ICT.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- increase significantly the rate of students' progress to raise standards - Inadequate

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Students' behaviour has continued to improve in most lessons and around the college. The number of internal and external exclusions continues to fall with a further reduction this term compared with the same period last year. The college behaviour policy is being used more consistently. The students themselves say that behaviour has improved, except in a very few lessons where students become bored or where the teacher does not apply sanctions soon enough. Individualised support for targeted students such as the Year 8 'on track' students is already having a positive impact in reducing the number of incidents of poor behaviour. The students are motivated by the affirmation they receive in positive text messages and 'on track' marks.

Attendance overall improved in 2008/9 compared with the previous year. The number of persistently absent students had been reducing since the previous inspection, but there was a dip in attendance during the first half of this term attributed to illness and this increased the number of students identified as persistently absent. During the second half of this term the number of persistently absent students reduced again but is still too high. Persistent absentees are now tracked closely, but the same rigour is not applied to students whose attendance is poor but who are not classified as persistent absentees. The college is introducing a better system for recognising good attendance that will reward a wider range of students for improved attendance. Punctuality during the first half of the autumn term was better than the previous Year, but unpunctuality has risen in recent weeks. Some students still show a lack of urgency in getting to lessons.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- continue to improve students' attendance and behaviour - Satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

Although there is still inconsistency in the quality of teaching, some teaching has improved as a result of coaching from experienced staff. The active involvement of students in planning and assessing their own learning has improved. In the best lessons, there is now a very clear focus on enabling students to understand exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their grades further. This was evident in an outstanding English lesson, where students contributed very well to evaluating each other's progress and made excellent progress in developing active reading skills. However, the quality of teachers' marking of students' work remains inconsistent.

Most teachers are setting higher expectations for behaviour in lessons and are more confident in dealing with any challenging behaviour. As a consequence, the vast majority of lessons now provide a calm and purposeful learning environment although there remain a small number of lessons where learning is disrupted because behaviour is not well managed. This is sometimes related to temporary staffing. Students with a statement of special educational need benefit from improved individual support and are well included in lessons. As a result, they now generally make good progress. Individual education plans have been properly established. However, the targets in the plans are not always specific enough to provide clear guidance to teachers and support staff. Teachers are now routinely setting learning objectives which are shared with students at the start of lessons. However, the objectives and work set are not always well enough matched to the different levels of individual learners. As a consequence, some students are still not sufficiently challenged whilst others find work set too difficult.

The use of assessment information to identify and tackle underachievement has improved. Strategies are now in place to ensure that assessment is more accurate. Students who are underachieving are identified and action plans are drawn up to boost their attainment. Closer monitoring by heads of departments has led to a sharper evaluation of the targets set. As a result, interventions are put in place for students highlighted as requiring additional support.

Although there is some developing good practice in collecting information and analysing it to track students' progress, there is still too much variation between departments. For example, although the use of a 'traffic light' system to demonstrate progress is widespread, the way in which the system is interpreted varies between departments. As a consequence, there remains a lack of coherence in the overview of assessment across the college and it is harder for students to gain a clear understanding of how well they are doing. Procedures for 'Assessing Pupils' Progress' are developing, particularly in the English department where they are well embedded.

Judgement

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leaders continue relentlessly to drive the college forward and systems of accountability have become well established. Students and teachers at all levels comment very positively on the efforts that are being made by

the senior leaders in their drive to raise standards; they are firm in their belief that the college is much improved since the time of the last inspection. Improved and well focused action planning underpins the improvements being made and incorporates clear success criteria, although not all these are on target to be met within the designated timescales.

There are now clearly defined systems in place for the monitoring of teachers' performance and the impact on students' learning. In some cases the systems are working very well, for instance, in the case of newly qualified teachers who are closely monitored, have their lessons observed regularly and receive constructive feedback. They speak very highly of the support that they receive; it is testimony to the effectiveness of this that two of the outstanding lessons observed were delivered by newly qualified teachers. However, some inconsistencies in the application of monitoring procedures act as a brake on improvement, particularly with regard to monitoring the quality of marking and feedback given to students. Where poor marking is still evident it presents a barrier to accelerating progress and raising attainment.

Middle leaders continue to be well focused on raising attainment and make good use of the tracking system to identify where there is underachievement. However, the needs of students are not yet fully reflected in lesson planning. Match of work to learning needs is sometimes very good, but there remain too many instances where it is simply measured by the quality of different students' outcomes to the same task.

Considerable efforts have been made to improve the provision for community cohesion. Extended links with the local community are now in place, staff awareness has been raised via an in-service training day and there is an action plan in place with clear success criteria. The governing body has been strengthened, challenging questions are asked of college leaders and all statutory requirements are now in place.

Judgement

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 - Satisfactory
- ensure all statutory requirements are fully in place - Satisfactory

External support

The local authority has provided effective support since the previous visit. The monitoring and inspection team adviser has trained middle leaders in understanding the new Ofsted framework; worked closely with the governing body's standards and

evaluation committee; has trained new governors on the use of data; and has supported the headteacher in writing the autumn term raising attainment plan.

Local authority National Strategy consultants have worked effectively with staff in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and ICT and provided good support in improving approaches to behaviour, attendance and assessment for learning. The college has received good support from local authority governor services in setting up the Trust arrangements. The National Challenge Adviser has provided specific support for strategies to improve attendance and the planning of professional development.