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6 November 2009

Mr Brian Sarahan  
Headteacher  
Humberston Maths and Computing College  
Humberston Avenue  
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DN36 4TF

Dear Mr Sarahan

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Humberston Maths and Computing College

Following my visit with Peter Bannon, Moira Fitzpatrick, and Pankaj Gulab, additional inspectors, to your school on 4 to 5 November 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 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 not 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 North East Lincolnshire LA.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young  
Her Majesty's Inspector



## Special measures: monitoring of Humberston Maths and Computing College

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 4 to 5 November 2009

### Evidence

During the monitoring inspection, inspectors scrutinised a range of documents and examined students' work in lessons, 24 part lessons, three tutor periods and two assemblies were observed. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teaching staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and the School Improvement Partner. Informal discussions were also held with students in class and at social times.

### Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the headteacher took up his post on 1 June 2009. Following his arrival, the senior leadership team were restructured to include two deputy and five assistant headteachers all of whom have specific leadership responsibilities. New leaders for design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education have been appointed. Seven staff and one of the deputy headteachers joined the college in September 2009. A probationary period has been imposed on the college by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and the college is a member of the Gaining Ground Project. A new school improvement partner began work with the college on 1 September 2009. The college is now linked with Wakefield City High School.

### Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

In 2009, students attained their best ever results and these were a considerable improvement compared to those in the previous year. The proportion of students attaining five A\* to C grades was 76 per cent and when English and mathematics are included the proportion was 62 per cent. Other positive features were the reduction in the gap between girls' and boys' performance and the improved results in the specialist subjects of mathematics and ICT. However, results in English language, geography, religious education and all design and technology areas were not good enough.

The college has established new systems for tracking students' progress as data gathered prior to this current term has not been considered secure enough. These systems appear to be rigorous with tracking done by gender, ability, looked after children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The first round of data gathering is nearing completion so was not available to view at this visit. In lessons observed during the current visit, progress has improved.



Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that all groups of students make at least satisfactory progress – satisfactory.

Other relevant student outcomes

Students' opinions are increasingly being sought by senior leaders and this development is valued by students. Behaviour sanctions are embedded into the daily life of the college. Students welcome the review of the rewards systems which they have helped to develop. Behaviour in and around the college is good and students are welcoming and courteous to visitors. Students have a well developed awareness of right and wrong which is supported well through different subjects and assemblies. Students report that they enjoy their lessons and this is reflected in their continuing good attendance. Whilst punctuality to lessons during the day is good, the start of some first lessons is disrupted by a small number of students who arrive late in the morning.

The effectiveness of provision

The teaching and learning group has, since the last visit, continued to improve the consistency of teaching. For example, a common planning format is used to ensure that basic strategies are present in lessons. There has been a steady focus on sharing an understanding of what constitutes good teaching and learning. Students are learning to assess their own and others' learning with increasing accuracy and this is developing their confidence as learners. As a result, many students report that they are enjoying learning more this school year and lessons often proceed at a faster pace than previously.

More good and better teaching was observed during the visit than previously. Good learning is characterised by well planned lessons, which provide high levels of challenge and the right starting point to both motivate students and to enable them to work independently. Lessons are well paced, teachers have high expectations and students are keen to impress their teachers with their hard work. Learning is less effective when teachers over-explain or give too much support to students in lessons. This prevents them from finding things out for themselves and reduces their drive for success. In too many lessons, however, teaching is still aimed at 'one size fits all', so that there are groups of higher and lower ability students who are not given work at the right level of challenge. The effectiveness of teaching assistants is variable. Where expertise has been developed and planning time used well they are effective in supporting students. However, too often they have no meaningful role in the classroom.



Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Embed the use of assessment data into classroom practice to ensure that learning activities meet the needs and interests of all students – satisfactory.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning; eradicate the inadequate practice and develop the satisfactory lessons to good or better – satisfactory.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new headteacher has communicated a clear vision for the college that underlines the strong focus on improving outcomes for every student as an individual. Senior leaders are working with enthusiasm on the improvement areas for which they are responsible. As a result, the capacity to secure the required improvements has been enhanced. The role of middle managers as leaders is improving, however, there remain some inconsistencies. The quality of teaching and learning frequently reflects this inconsistency in departments. There are, however, some very strong examples in middle leadership that the college must use as the standard to which all departments should aspire.

Through extensive monitoring this term, senior leaders are better aware of where strengths and consistency are developing in teaching and what weaknesses remain to be tackled. The teaching and learning group have now identified areas for the professional development of staff and this is planned for later in the term.

Raising students' academic and personal achievements is at the heart of the college improvement plan. It is a well crafted working document and through the regular reviews, leaders are very clear what has been achieved and what still needs to be done. A rigorous and well documented process of departmental reviews feed well into the main improvement plan.

Governors have increased the effectiveness of their work. They understand that improving the quality of teaching and learning and students' progress are fundamental to any future developments. They are both supporting and regularly challenging the staff to explain how provision and outcomes are improving.

Results in the specialist subjects of mathematics and ICT were much improved in 2009, even though targets were not quite met at Key Stage 4. However, in 2009, the number of students attaining A\* to C grades in the statistics examination more than doubled compared to 2008. During the inspection, teaching observed in mathematics was usually very strong with matching high levels of progress and enjoyment from the students. Teaching in ICT lessons has improved. Robust tracking systems indicate that currently students are on track to reach their challenging targets in both subjects. Leadership of mathematics is exceptional. Apart



from the improvements in mathematics teaching, learning and results, a GCSE course for adults in the wider community has been established as well as activities for pupils in the feeder primary schools. The new leader for ICT has quickly established himself and started to develop and improve ICT resources across the college. The new director of specialism has brought a sense of urgency to widen and monitor the impact of specialist status which is a strength of the college.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Focus leadership and management at all levels, on improving the outcomes for students – good.

#### External support

An external consultant continues to provide good support for individual subject areas and for whole-school issues. The new School Improvement Partner has a clear understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses, but has yet to monitor and evaluate its work. Together with the headteacher, they have reviewed students' academic targets in order to provide a higher level of challenge. The programme of support between the college and Wakefield City High School continues to develop. Local authority officers were not available for discussion during the visit and have not monitored their statement of action since the last monitoring visit. As a result, it is not possible to evaluate the local authorities' impact on the improvements made by the college.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- No additional priorities were identified.

