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Dr D Kershaw
The Executive Principal
Fullhurst Community
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Dear Dr Kershaw

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Fullhurst Community College

Following my visit with Glyn Storer and Jackie Pentlow, Additional Inspectors , to your college on 14 and 15 October 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 college 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 the interim executive board and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester City.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth

Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Fullhurst Community College

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 October 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the college's work, scrutinised documents and met with the two principals, members of the senior leadership team, including those seconded from the local authority, groups of students, the chair of the interim executive board, and representatives from the local authority and a national leader of education.

Context

There have been a number of changes to the college senior leadership team. The principal left during the summer term 2009 and has been replaced by an acting principal. Twenty teachers left at the end of the summer term.

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

The results of the 2009 external examinations were largely as predicted, with 20% of students gaining 5 passes at A* to C including mathematics and English. This is well below the floor target and the statutory agreed target of 34%. There is a slight improvement upon the 2008 results for the proportions of students gaining 5 passes at A* to C with the college narrowly missing its target of 43%.

Although standards remain low across both key stages, students' work in lessons and in their books, together with the college's own tracking information, shows that their progress is slowly beginning to accelerate and students are beginning to enjoy their learning. This is because the college has strengthened the way it monitors students' performance and consequently has a much clearer understanding of where improvement is required. Senior leaders have successfully introduced several new strategies to improve student' achievement, which are leading to improvements in classroom practice and paying greater dividends in terms of student outcomes. Programmes such as one to one intervention have also been implemented recently but the college is not yet secure in understanding the progress of these students.

The relative underachievement of boys has been addressed by implementing curricular provision more suited to their style of learning. As a result the higher attaining boys now outperform the girls. The college has also implemented mechanisms to monitor progress of the other students groups, such those from minority ethnic backgrounds but do not yet have sufficient data to show their current progress or to make use of this information to

improve provision. The target group of students in Year 11 who are predicted to attain 5 A* to C grades including English and mathematics is not monitored closely enough to ensure that they remain on track to meet their targets.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and accelerate students' progress, especially that of boys, and particularly in mathematics and science – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The college has instigated a range of effective measures to improve students' behaviour and their response in lessons. As a result, there has been a noticeable improvement in behaviour since the previous monitoring visit and many students refer to this with approval. Behaviour in lessons was also typically satisfactory or better. The college rules are known and were usually adhered to without fuss. Nevertheless, there are still groups of students who need coaxing or disciplining to comply with basic routines because not all staff apply the college procedures consistently and so, in a small minority of lessons, inappropriate behaviour continues to limit students' progress. Movement around the corridors was generally sensible and at lunchtimes, breaks and between lessons, the students mingled happily and queued patiently.

The quality of relationships between students, teachers and supervisory staff has improved since the previous monitoring visit and are generally positive. Most students behave satisfactorily and respond to the guidance that they are given. The atmosphere in and around college, for example at lunchtime, is pleasant and sociable. Keeping students on site has done much to reduce tensions in the immediate community and to create a settled atmosphere during the afternoon session. Students respond well to the wide range of activities available to them at such times. Take up rates are good and students report that this provision does much to increase their enjoyment of college life.

The new behaviour support unit and the alternative education provision at the skills centre have had a marked impact. Several students testify to its effectiveness in making them reflect on their misbehaviour and reducing the likelihood of them re-offending. As a result, there has been a marked reduction in exclusions during the last year.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has strengthened and the significant proportion of teaching that was regularly inadequate has reduced owing to an increasing

understanding of the features of effective lessons and more effective monitoring. As a result, there is less inadequate teaching and more that is satisfactory or better than at the time of the last visit.

Expectations of what students are capable of are steadily rising and the pace of learning has gained momentum. In the main, lessons are purposeful and organised. Many teachers have benefited from intensive training and support to improve the quality of teaching. There has been a noticeable improvement in the type and range of activities offered to the students.

During the introductions to lessons, teachers discuss with the students what they are going to learn through a satisfactory recapitulation of work completed in previous lessons. This allows students to revise and link their prior learning to the new work. However, some teachers are not using the agreed systems in place give clear guidance as to how the students will know when they have succeeded. This means that some students are unsure about what they are expected to learn in the lesson or how their successes will be evaluated. Consequently, some students are not sufficiently helped to focus on what they are learning and so find it difficult to assess their own progress by the ends of lessons.

The college has rightly introduced a new policy to rectify the inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking identified in the previous monitoring visit and clear guidance is now provided for teachers. In the best practice teachers are assessing students' achievement and are giving advice to students on how to make the next step in their learning. In some cases, a meaningful dialogue between students and teachers is taking place but this is an inconsistent picture across the college. Importantly, on occasions, teachers' marking is too generous and poor quality work by students is praised and in some cases too infrequent to be of benefit to students.

Systems are now in place to give teachers all the information they require to assess students accurately and move them effectively through the National Curriculum levels. However, many teachers are not using these support systems as effectively as they could and this constrains the progress the students make, and takes away much of the benefit of collecting the data. As result, the planning for students of different abilities remains inconsistent. This is because the data about students past performance and future targets is still not used well enough to ensure that they are challenged and supported as much as they should be in lessons. This is particularly the case for the targeted groups of students.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by: quickly eradicating inadequate teaching and tackling weaknesses in teaching so that students are consistently challenged; making better use of assessment

information to ensure that work is matched to students' capabilities, improving the quality of academic guidance given to students – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The more settled conditions in the college have enabled the senior leaders to be more strategic. The executive principal ensured that the lines of accountability are clear and has increased the amount of time for the leadership team to direct their areas of priority. Consequently, the leadership team are now more focused on raising standards and promoting a caring, supportive ethos for the college community. This is being achieved through an intolerance of unsatisfactory teaching as well as a drive to improve systems and procedures for assessment and a more rigorous and robust approach to monitoring and evaluation. This includes observing the quality of teaching and learning in lessons and providing detailed written feedback to teachers about the quality of their work. These actions have helped secure a more coherent and systematic approach to evaluating the quality the college's work, than was previously the case. The impact of continuing professional development and of personalised packages of support for some teachers is evident, however, some of the satisfactory teaching remains fragile.

The developing culture of accountability is supported by an increasingly rigorous analysis of performance data. This information is now used to set targets that are more challenging for students, to keep track of progress towards them, and to trigger a range of intervention strategies to tackle underachievement. However, it does not happen frequently enough. Assessments are conducted half-termly, which means that Year 11 have just been carried out and Year 9 are not yet available for this academic year. Moreover, a number of staff are not using the data on a day to day basis to set suitable work in lessons and to monitor the improvement of individual and groups of students. This needs to be consistently used if the college is to realise its predictions for current Key Stage 4 students, which are to raise standards so that 34% likely to obtain the equivalent of at least five GCSEs A* to C including English and mathematics.

The interim executive board is working effectively to challenge and support the college. Meetings are well planned, well led, and thorough, with a clear focus on achievement and standards. Importantly, faculty leaders are being invited to meetings to make presentations to the board. This is valuable both to hold these leaders to account and to inform the board of improvements and key issues. Nevertheless, despite the improvements and aspirations outlined above, staff and members of the interim executive board know there is more to do in monitoring and evaluating the college's provision, especially in fully engaging faculty and subject leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve leadership and management by: urgently confirming the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders improving the coordination and evaluation of activities so standards rise, teaching improves and key initiatives are fully embedded ensuring middle leaders are appropriately involved in the decision making process and are held to account for the standards achieved and quality of provision in their area of responsibilities – good.

External support

The college receives effective support from both its National Leader in Education and from the National Challenge Adviser who have a very clear understanding of the measures required to bring about improvements in all aspects of the college's work.

The LA has been supportive in successfully resolving the complex and sensitive staffing difficulties apparent at the time of the previous monitoring visit. It has also kept itself up to date with the college's progress through regular attendance at the interim executive board and progress group meetings. However, the LA has not carried out a detailed review of the college's progress through direct monitoring of provision since it was made subject to special measures in December 2008.

Moreover, the members of the interim executive board remain unsure as to the long-term future of the college and this is hampering their plans to provide a permanent sustainable strategic leadership of the college.

Priorities for further improvement

- The college should continue to focus on the areas for improvement identified in its previous inspection.