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Mr Roberts
Cromwell Community College
Wenny Road
Chatteris
Cambridgeshire
PE16 6UU

Dear Mr Roberts

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 December 2009, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please give my thanks to the members of the senior management team who conducted the joint observation of teaching with inspectors.

The senior management team was restructured at the start of the 2009 academic year with the appointment of two vice principals.

As a result of the inspection on 27 November 2008, the school was asked to raise standards across the curriculum by ensuring that the features of good practice in teaching and learning are applied consistently across the school. Senior staff were asked to use strategic planning more effectively to ensure that the roles, responsibilities and actions of staff at all levels combine to accelerate the school's improvement; and to ensure that students have opportunities for greater involvement in their own learning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made:

satisfactory progress in making improvements

and

good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The proportion of students securing five higher grade GCSE including English and mathematics has been below, but not significantly below average since 2007;



however, the 2009 unvalidated results are in line with the national data. Similarly, the average points scored in all public examinations is now above the national average for the first time in three years. Outcomes in mathematics have been significantly above average in recent years and in 2009, English results began to show improvement. Results from the school's specialist humanities subjects varied with those in religious education above the national average.

This was the first year results of advanced level courses were published separately from those of the Cromwell / Neale Wade Partnership. Overall results were more positive than in previous years and 61% of students secured A-C grade passes and 98% of students secured A – E passes. All of those students who chose to continue their education at university gained admission.

The recently reorganised senior management team demonstrated a secure grasp of their areas of responsibility. Senior managers were involved in the joint observations of lessons with inspectors. A formal evaluation of this exercise and the school's formal monitoring procedures revealed that senior staff had a secure understanding of the importance of learning outcomes when utilising the 2009 Ofsted grading criteria. In the best lessons, staff nurtured individual progress in a well-structured programme of challenges and opportunities. In an outstanding advanced level English literature lesson, insightful questioning provoked an academic debate on the work of Thomas Hardy which revealed the depth of the students' understanding. Where lessons were less effective, the pace and timing of activities was not managed as well as possible or when having revisited prior learning satisfactorily, staff failed to move the lesson on to new challenges. Where teaching and the use of homework was found to be most effective, the engagement of students in their own learning was more evident.

Senior staff have taken positive steps to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence and the latter is currently below the average for similar schools. Good behaviour was in evidence around the school and in all lessons visited.

One to one tuition has been organised for students aged 11-14 in need of individual tuition in English and mathematics. Steps have been taken to improve the tracking of student progress in the sixth form and this is now secure at a departmental level.

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

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector