

Serco Education
Boundary House
2 Wythall Green Way T 08456 40 40 40
Middle Lane enquiries@ofsted.gov.
Birmingham uk Direct T08456 40 40 40
B47 6LW www.ofsted.gov.uk jacqueline.wordsworth@ofsted.gov.uk

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Dr D Kershaw
The Executive Principal
Fullhurst Community College
Imperial Avenue
Leicester
Leicestershire
LE3 1AH

Dear Dr Kershaw

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Fullhurst Community College

Following my visit with David Young and Heather Housden, Additional Inspectors, to your college on 9 and 10 February 2010, 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 third 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 – good

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 third monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 February 2010

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 pupils, the chair of the interim executive board and representatives from the local authority and a national leader of education.

Context

There has been more stability in the leadership team since my last visit. Plans are in place for the college to become part of a National Challenge Trust and the process to appoint a permanent principal for September 2010 is underway. Five teachers left at the end of the autumn term.

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

The focus on raising pupils' attainment is beginning to produce positive results at Key Stage 4 in English, mathematics and science with increasing numbers of pupils, particularly boys reaching the level expected for their age. Programmes such as one-to-one intervention and active tutorial sessions have successfully led to improvements in classroom practice and are paying greater dividends in terms of pupils' outcomes. Consequently an increasing number of pupils are enjoying their learning.

Encouragingly, the results of the early entry external examinations held in November 2009 show an increased proportion of pupils gaining passes at A* to C in mathematics and English, with 34% of pupils gaining at least a C in English and 26% in mathematics. As a result, ambitious targets are now in place for summer 2010. These figures exceed the results achieved by the previous Year 11 in summer 2009 and demonstrate that the gap between the college's results and national performance is beginning to diminish.

The most recent assessment information and work in class shows that attainment for pupils in Year 10 remains securely above the statutory minimum target, and represents improved progress for these pupils. This has happened for a number of reasons not least of which is that pupils who are predicted to attain five A* to C grades including English and mathematics are monitored closely to ensure that they remain on track to meet their targets. Nevertheless there are still risks. Because of the legacy of pupils' previous poor experience and provision, there are still gaps in pupils' knowledge, particularly in non core subjects, and these need to be filled quickly.

The latest college information shows a less positive picture for Years 8 and 9 particularly in the relation to the accuracy of assessment and weaker provision for pupils in some subjects in these year groups. Teacher assessments for pupils in Year 7 show that more pupils are making at least satisfactory progress across the major subjects of English, mathematics and science but less so in other subjects.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

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

Other relevant pupil outcomes

There has been a noticeable improvement in behaviour since my previous visit and many pupils refer to this with appreciation. The behaviour support unit continues to have a marked impact. Several pupils testify to its effectiveness in making them reflect on their misbehaviour and reducing the likelihood of their re-offending. Consequently there is a continued reduction in the use of exclusions to manage challenging behaviour. Movement around the corridors was generally sensible and orderly. Behaviour in lessons was also normally satisfactory or better. The pupils' attitudes to college are more positive. Pupils report feeling safer and they understand that the college is making strong efforts to help them achieve more highly. They also appreciate the improved arrangements at lunchtime which give them a wider range of activities to enjoy. However, in some subjects, there is a legacy of disaffection which impedes progress.

The effectiveness of provision

There has been marked improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous monitoring visit, with a greater proportion of satisfactory and good teaching being observed, and a small amount that was outstanding. Where teaching is good or better, progress quickens. Teachers make it clear to pupils what they are going to learn and give clear guidelines about how their success will be measured. In these lessons, the work is stimulating and well matched to the pupils' different learning needs. **Lesson observations show that in the main, lessons are purposeful and organised.** Teachers are now more confident. Discussions in small groups and with a partner are becoming more widely used, enabling pupils to discuss their learning with each other. Teachers' use of questioning is also improved. Some teachers make good use of well-targeted questions to assess how much pupils have understood so as to adapt the teaching accordingly. Despite this positive picture, a small proportion of teaching remains ineffective because some pupils do not make enough progress. The less successful lessons are mainly teacher led and directed, and often include too much talking by the teacher which lessens the

progress pupils make. Moreover questions asked of pupils only require the recall of information and do not require them to give extended answers or explain their thinking. These weaknesses need to be addressed if the gap is to close between what pupils are attaining and of which they are capable.

Pupils are becoming increasingly involved in evaluating their own work and setting targets for improvement. Most know their current and predicted levels, and these are found in most exercise books. However, pupils are not always able to explain what they need to do to reach the higher level. Marking is more regular with some that is evaluative. Nonetheless, it remains inconsistent in quality and frequency across the college.

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 pupils are consistently challenged; making better use of assessment information to ensure that work is matched to pupils' capabilities; improving the quality of academic guidance given to pupils – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive principal continues to provide very effective leadership, ably supported by the acting principal, and is moving the college forward well, often in the face of very difficult circumstances. He has a very clear appreciation of the college's current strengths and acknowledges the weaknesses which hinder efforts to raise attainment. He is clear that more needs to be done to capitalise on the improved climate for learning to ensure that the pupils achieve their potential.

The college is building capacity in its senior team and within the ranks of middle managers to sustain and drive improvement. There are well defined systems by which the senior staff support and challenge the heads of department in English, mathematics and science to improve performance in their subjects. There is less evidence of rigorous scrutiny of the work of other departments in order to improve their results. **The main reason for this is because some middle leaders do not focus enough on pupils' learning, or make an accurate judgment on progress based on the range of evidence available.** Nonetheless the improvement in strategic management, coupled with a sharply focused analysis of the major departments' test and examination results, means the college is well placed to know where its priorities lie.

The monitoring of teaching and learning has been comprehensive and systematic. Teachers in need of support have been identified and suitable

programmes of support implemented. Staff new to the college report that they are well supported.

The interim executive board continues to challenge and support the college effectively. Members of the board meet regularly and take time to visit the college and get to know the staff and pupils. They receive detailed progress reports from the senior leadership team and the national challenge advisor and are rightly pleased with the college's direction of travel. They are in the process of enabling the college to become part of a National Challenge Trust and expect this to be operational from September 2010.

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 of 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 recent college review undertaken by the local authority in February 2010 is not only accurate but has proved to be helpful in taking the college forward. The main focus of the local authority's work has been in enabling the college to secure its partners as it moves towards becoming part of a National Challenge Trust.

Priorities for further improvement

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