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Mrs Trish Burleigh  
The Headteacher  
Dartford Technology College  
Heath Lane  
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Dear Mrs Burleigh

### Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Jon Carter on 30 April 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would be grateful if you would pass on my thanks to the teachers, the non-teaching staff and the students who also contributed to the visit.

Since the last inspection the college has moved to a new building and the number of sixth form students has increased. The school has also joined a new partnership which has extended the range of courses and qualifications on offer to students.

As a result of the inspection on 8 and 9 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- use self-evaluation more effectively to ensure that teaching, learning and curriculum initiatives improve the achievement and standards of students
- improve the tracking of students' progress so as to identify and address potential underachievement and to inform students how to improve their work
- set more ambitious targets and thereby raise expectations of what students can achieve.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The shortcomings identified in the last inspection are being addressed and the effect of the changes introduced is evident in the improved progress and attainment of students. Good progress has been made in setting more ambitious targets, including those in the specialist subjects and for attendance. The school has commendably established its own enhanced Dartford College Targets which contribute effectively



to raising aspirations. In discussion with inspectors the students clearly knew their target grades. Year 11 students are on track to exceed these challenging targets with regard to the proportion of students gaining five A\* to C at GCSE level, and five A\* to C (including English and mathematics). Given the below average entry levels of these students, this reflects satisfactory achievement. Observations during the visit of the work of students confirm this picture of attainment and progress.

The new tracking systems introduced are now ensuring that those students who require additional support are quickly identified, that appropriate interventions take place, and necessary changes to the curriculum are introduced. The school has identified borderline pupils who, with help, are being encouraged to attain a higher grade. Internal and external mentors are praised by students as being helpful. The role of learning managers has been improved and, together with heads of subject, they are now more responsible for tracking students' progress. Progress meetings ensure staff are more accountable for their students' achievement. Teachers, although having this good range of accessible assessment data, are not always using it to plan work that effectively challenges students of different abilities, and progress slows.

The school's capacity to improve is further reinforced by the improvements made to self-evaluation. Monitoring is embedded at all levels. The well-established monitoring cycle includes lesson observations, reviews of the curriculum, student's work, and exam analysis. Stakeholders are fully involved and these activities are enabling the school to have an accurate picture of its strengths and where development is needed. There is a rigour to self-evaluation at the whole school level, but inconsistencies between subjects remain. For example, the analysis by subject leaders of the attainment and progress of different student groups is insufficiently detailed. Consequently there are opportunities missed by these leaders to quickly identify when and where improvements to students' learning can take place. Lesson observations provide teachers with helpful feedback, and shows impact in the increasing proportion of good lessons. However, there is an insufficiently sharp focus on the effect of teaching methodology on students' learning, and the progress of different student groups.

Observations confirm that the school accurately judges the quality of teaching and learning. It is overall satisfactory, but there remain inconsistencies. Good teaching is marked by positive relationships which encourage students to engage with the work. Modern technology is used well to motivate students and to bring pace. Behaviour, in and out of lessons, is good. Teaching assistants are proactive in meeting the needs of students. Less effective lessons are characterised by a lack of challenge for different student groups, and mixed levels of expectations of their work. Regular marking takes place but it is not always made clear to students how they can improve their work.

The specialist applied learning and technology status is contributing well. The virtual learning environment is providing good opportunities for students to become more



independent learners. A group of 'super-user' subjects are utilising the online provision very well, including providing homework and revision materials for students.

Support from the local authority has been effective in providing advisers and support. The action plan drawn up to tackle the development issues is detailed and regularly reviewed.

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

Michael Pye  
Additional Inspector

