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26 February 2010

Mr Arnold Kuchartschuk  
West Craven High Technology College  
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Dear Mr Kuchartschuk

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 January 2010 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

As a result of the inspection on 3rd and 4th March 2008 the school was asked to:

- accelerate the rising trend of improvement at Key Stage 4
- raise achievement and standards at Key Stage 3, particularly in English and science
- increase the proportion of good teaching and learning to meet the needs of all students
- improve the systems of monitoring student performance to ensure a consistent approach to aid improvement.

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

The rising trend of examination results at Key Stage 4 noted in the last inspection has not been sustained. Attainment remains low overall and in published examination data a downward trend is evident in many key measures. Unvalidated data suggest that for the year group that took GCSEs in 2009, boys' attainment was lower than girls' in relation to national figures. The school's tracking records and

early-entry examination results provide firm evidence that attainment in 2010 is likely to return to, or surpass, 2007 levels in the proportion of students gaining at least five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics. Students' progress relative to their starting points remains below that expected. There is evidence that, at Key Stage 3, standards overall have risen. Data provided by the school indicates strong improvements in the proportion of students reaching the expected levels in science. While more fluctuations are evident in English and mathematics, standards in these subjects have been broadly sustained.

The measures introduced to improve teaching are having some impact. Evidence provided by the school and verified by the inspection team indicates that the proportion of good or better lessons has increased, although the school recognises the need to increase this further. Working with the support of the local authority, the school has helped teachers to focus more clearly on improving learning, through strategies such as sharing learning outcomes and success criteria with students. In the best lessons, students face challenging tasks, make informed choices, show interest and are keen to succeed. In less successful lessons, the pace of work continues to be slow and students are not sufficiently involved in their learning. The school has an appropriate strategy to bring about further improvements in the quality of teaching through focused training sessions and formal systems for sharing good practice.

The school now has a more refined system for monitoring academic progress. All departments submit information at regular intervals and managers are able to identify students who are underachieving and provide appropriate support. Where previously target-setting was managed at a departmental level, it is now managed by members of the senior leadership team; as a result the drive for improvement is more consistent across the school.

Progress in the school's capacity to improve is not yet sufficiently secure. While the school has been successful in reducing exclusions over the last two years, progress in several other areas is relatively recent and has been achieved with the help of considerable local authority support. The projected rise in attainment for 2010 needs to be consolidated. Similarly, the recent improvements in teaching are not yet sufficiently embedded and need to be sustained and built upon further, and staffing problems remain in English. Although the school has had some success in reducing the number of persistent absentees, attendance overall has dropped since the last inspection. The school's self-evaluation, including the evaluation of teaching, is accurate, and heads of department and individual teachers are taking increasing responsibility for students' progress. Improvement planning currently gives insufficient attention to improving attendance levels. The school has received effective support from the local authority in improving teaching; this support is also in helping to develop the school's capacity to improve.

The school's specialist status continues to make a sound contribution to provision and outcomes. Results in one of the specialist subjects, mathematics, have generally

been among the strongest in the school. A broad range of science options are available, and additional facilities for information and communication technology are helping students to have remote access to learning support.

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

Paul Chambers  
Her Majesty's Inspector