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30 April 2010

Lynn Culbert  
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Poulton Road  
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Lancashire  
FY7 7BS

Dear Mrs Culbert

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 April 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils and the Chair of the Management Committee who attended a meeting at very short notice.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher who were in an acting role at the time of the last inspection are now permanent post holders. The pupil profile remains much the same.

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

- improve provision for Year 11 students so that they all make good progress and their learning needs are met
- raise the achievement of students in English with a particular emphasis on improving writing
- raise achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) and ensure that it is used across the curriculum to extend the students' learning.

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

Achievement has improved as a result of the centre's success in addressing weaknesses identified by the last inspection. Outcomes at the end of Year 11, or

after two terms of interventions, are usually beyond expectations set on pupils' entry. Evidence from lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work shows that progress is improving in line with improved teaching and provision.

Provision for Year 11 pupils has significantly improved and, with it, achievement. The range of courses on offer has expanded and pupils are presented with greater and more appropriate challenge in the courses they are offered. The creation of opportunities for pupils to gain qualifications at the end of Year 10 has resulted in an increase in motivation on entering Year 11. This is characterised by improved attendance and a reduction in pupils' disengagement. Increasing opportunities for work-related learning are tailored to pupils' interests and often contribute significantly to improving pupils' prospects for future economic well-being because they often lead to opportunities for apprenticeships. The range of accredited courses equating to GCSE has been broadened and it is now unusual for pupils to leave without any form of qualification. Courses provided in settings other than the centre are very closely monitored to ensure that pupils are engaging and making the progress expected of them. Very few pupils end up not in education, employment or training after leaving and the trend is improving.

Achievement in English is improving through the provision of more opportunities for pupils to improve their writing. Expanding links with mainstream schools have contributed to more accurate moderation of pupils' work to help teachers plan lessons with an appropriate degree of challenge. The centre timetable has been adjusted to provide discrete lessons where pupils develop the skill to produce extended pieces of writing by linking together shorter pieces, such as when pupils were seen writing a postcard as part of a longer study of the voyage of the Titanic. Improvements in the use of ICT are having a considerable beneficial impact on pupils' willingness to write. Good work is prominently displayed to help motivate pupils and to celebrate their achievements. Wall displays also give pupils guidance as to how they can judge their own work against that of others and how they can create more complex sentences and use adventurous vocabulary to enliven their work. The relevance of writing is increasingly driven home by engaging pupils in activities such as writing application letters for jobs.

Achievement in ICT is improving. The centre has invested heavily to improve the quality and reliability of hard and software resources. Teachers have become confident users of computers and encourage their use in most lessons. Their skills have been improved through joint training with mainstream colleagues. Presentation skills are strongly promoted through the use of word-processing. With improved presentation comes more motivation, with many pupils expressing increased pride in their achievements.

The push for improvement has been determined and effective. There has been a considerable drive to provide an extensive programme of training, often alongside mainstream colleagues. Performance management has become much more formalised and collaborative. The centre is increasingly looked upon by other schools

as a professional service rather than a last resort for troubled pupils. The strong leadership of the headteacher has contributed considerably to the centre's raised profile and credibility within the local authority. Improved assessment procedures and tracking of pupils' progress have contributed to the centre being increasingly able to demonstrate its effectiveness. Collaborative links with other providers are proving particularly effective. The local authority has ensured that funding has been provided to support improvement, such as in ICT. Outside advice and guidance for improvement are welcomed, with regular monitoring by the local authority and an independent School Improvement Partner.

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

Alastair Younger  
Additional inspector