

11 February 2010

Chilwell School
Queen's Road West
Chilwell
Beeston
Nottingham NG9 5AL

Dear Mr Brierly

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 10 February 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass my thanks to the students and staff for the time they gave to share their views with me.

Since the inspection a new assistant headteacher has been appointed with responsibility for leading the school's specialisms.

As a result of the inspection on 10 June 2009, the school was asked to:

- raise standards particularly in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) and address the underachievement of boys
- improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that all lessons promote rapid progress through more exciting and challenging activities that provide opportunities for active, independent learning
- ensure leaders and managers at all levels are accountable for raising standards and directing improvement in the quality of teaching and learning
- ensure all safeguarding procedures meet government requirements.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

The 2009 GCSE results were higher than in previous years. The percentage of students gaining 5A* to C, including English and mathematics, rose and is at the national average. The school is making some headway in equalising the outcomes for boys and girls. Despite this improved attainment, these results confirmed that



the progress students have been making in recent years has been inadequate. The progress made by lower attaining students is a particular concern. Since the inspection there are promising signs that students are beginning to make better progress as a result of improvements the school has made to teaching and learning. The school is also implementing an improved curriculum that offers the prospect of better outcomes, particularly for lower attaining students.

The school has adopted much more challenging targets and is making progress in ensuring these are understood by teachers and students. Students are receiving more guidance about what they must do achieve their targets, although inconsistencies in marking remain. In the better lessons seen, teachers are linking the lesson outcomes to students' individual targets. The sharing of the assessment criteria is allowing students to take greater responsibility for making improvements. In many lessons students are working harder because teachers expect tasks to be completed more quickly. Students are enjoying the increased variety of strategies used to ensure they are more actively involved in learning. Teachers are encouraging students to think more deeply about their learning by asking more thought provoking questions. Improved questioning is ensuring greater engagement. A student commented that, 'You have to concentrate because you never know when you will be asked a question'. Teachers now have much more detailed information about the progress being made by the students they teach. In the very best practice, particularly in English, teachers are using this information to tailor lessons to students' needs, including questions targeted at specific groups of students. This strategy is improving the progress boys make.

The school is implementing a much more sophisticated approach to the planning of lessons. This has encouraged useful discussion about teaching and learning in the school and that has been particularly helpful to more confident teachers. The school and local authority evaluations confirm that this is not yet resulting in enough consistent effective practice. Plans contain clear outcomes, including a useful focus on application, but the activities in lessons are not always linked strongly enough to the key outcome. Students expressed frustration about not always knowing the main focus of a lesson. Too often insufficient time is devoted to reviewing progress towards the outcomes. Opportunities are lost to praise students for the progress they are making and to clarify the outcomes at levels appropriate to the full ability range. The greater emphasis on challenging targets is a little undermined by the inconsistencies in the approach to homework. Students indicated that in mathematics they receive regular homework which they are expected to complete but that this is not the case in all subjects. Students experience a minority of lessons, particularly in science, in which they are not encouraged to think about the lesson content because too much time is devoted to copying.

Increased accountability is encouraging leaders at all levels to pay greater attention to student progress. There are promising signs that middle leaders are more willing to critically evaluate provision and challenge practice that does not promote high standards. Equal opportunities are being enhanced by ensuring lower attaining



students have fair access to the better teaching needed to ensure they make the progress of which they are capable. The school's procedures for safeguarding have been improved and meet current government requirements.

The school's specialisms are now being led well. The school has correctly prioritised improving the quality of provision in the subjects most closely associated with the school's specialisms. Changes to the curriculum have resulted in more students on courses that lead to qualifications in ICT. Although lessons in mathematics are still not ensuring students make sufficient progress, there is evidence that leaders have instilled a strong willingness to improve amongst members of this department.

The quality of support provided by those external to the school is good. The local authority has a record of having provided timely and well judged challenge to the school. Most recently this has helped the school appreciate the need to consolidate the many changes introduced since the school was inspected. This challenge is complemented by flexible support that is highly rated by the school's staff. The support and challenge provided by the School Improvement Partner is appreciated by senior leaders.

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

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector