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17 June 2010

Mr Brian Sarahan  
Headteacher  
Humberston Maths and Computing College  
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Humberston  
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Lincolnshire  
DN36 4TF

Dear Mr Sarahan

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Humberston Maths and Computing College

Following my visit with Lyn Field, additional inspector, to your school on 15 and 16 June 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 governors and the Director of Children's Services for North East Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Humberston Maths and Computing College

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 June 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents and observed the work of the school including a meeting of the Teaching and Learning Group. Nineteen part lessons were observed. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and members of the school council.

## Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, some posts in art and design, and drama continue to be covered by temporary teachers.

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

The college's system for tracking students' progress from their starting points on entry has now been successfully developed to include students in all year groups and not just those in Year 11. The system is robust and identifies clearly students' attainment and the progress they make in different subjects. Information is analysed carefully enabling senior leaders to investigate where performance is giving cause for concern. Their monitoring has revealed that the progress of more able students is still an issue across the college, together with students' attainment in some subjects. Conversely, those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making more rapid progress. This situation was confirmed by inspectors during the monitoring visit. Assessment data are also used to identify strengths in provision and to support subject areas and individual staff where needed. A broad range of strategies continues to be used to help students do as well as possible in their examinations. These include mentoring, support to complete coursework, smaller teaching groups and revision classes. As a result, college data and inspection evidence indicate that the proportion of students who are on course to meet examination targets in all subjects has increased compared to the corresponding time last year.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that all groups of students make at least satisfactory progress – good

## Other relevant pupil outcomes

Inspectors spoke to members of the school council who have collated information from all year groups concerning students' views about the quality of teaching and



learning together with their suggestions for improvement. Council members will present their findings to the staff next week. Students have experienced strong, exciting teaching and learning and recognise when a few lessons do not match their expectations of the best. They were, however, unanimous in their comment that 'the college has improved so much in the last year'. They also have much pride in their uniform reporting that, 'the uniform has given us a chance to be proud of the school, especially because of the badge'.

### The effectiveness of provision

Inspection evidence shows that generally teachers take into account their good knowledge of students' individual needs at the planning stage and that assessment data are used consistently to match activities to students' different abilities. As a result, lessons generally move at a good pace. However, there are still occasions where teachers do not respond quickly enough during lessons or recognise when tasks are either not challenging enough or are too difficult for students. The use of strategies such as mini-plenaries and questioning that probes their understanding is still too variable. Nevertheless, the proportion of good or outstanding teaching has slightly increased since the last monitoring visit and this closely matches the college's own records. In the strongest lessons, features of good teaching are seen consistently and are securely established. However, the improvement of satisfactory teaching is taking longer to achieve and some instances of inadequate teaching remain.

Senior leaders are relentless in their drive to improve the quality of teaching and they respond promptly to any issues raised from their regular monitoring. Sometimes, areas that have previously improved are not revisited soon enough to ensure that improvements are securely embedded in the practice of all teachers. For example, inspectors found that the drive to use assessment securely in lessons was not promoted consistently. Also, extension tasks to challenge students are too often about providing similar extra work rather than additional activities that require them to work at a higher level. There are many occasions where teaching assistants help to maintain the rate of progress in lessons, but, where they have not been adequately briefed about what students are expected to learn, they are unable to give the necessary support. In the very best lessons observed, teachers, although concerned that students should meet their targets, engaged them in their learning and provided interesting topics with sufficient time to enrich their personal development. For example, topics with a moral or cultural dimension, such as discussions of issues surrounding the atomic bomb, world trade and the existence of God, captured students' interest and challenged them to think and explore difficult issues.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Embed the use of assessment data into classroom practice to ensure that learning activities meet the needs and interests of all students – good



- Improve the quality of teaching and learning; eradicate the inadequate practice and develop the satisfactory lessons to good or better – satisfactory

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher, supported by senior leaders, is resolute in his drive to embed leadership and management systems and responsibilities throughout the college. The momentum for improvement, noted at previous monitoring visits has been maintained, embraced and understood by most staff. Middle leaders are empowered and expected to provide challenge and support for their subject areas. They are rigorously held to account, both by their line managers and by the governors' standards committee. Minutes from these meetings reveal a high level of challenge provided by governors, demonstrating also their thorough knowledge of data, students' progress and attainment. Senior leaders, however, recognise the need to amalgamate some departments; from September 2010, there will be six faculties rather than the current 13 subject areas.

The Teaching and Learning Group provides a useful bridge between the senior team and departmental staff and is successfully spreading practical ideas to expand teachers' bank of skills. Suitable training is provided in a relaxed environment, where teachers are expected to try new ideas before using them in the classroom. As a result, most teachers are becoming more confident. Across departments, a culture of professional pride and transparency is emerging and those subjects that make up the college's specialism are setting the tone for this.

The drive and ambition in the leadership of the college's specialist subjects are evident and there is a healthy professional rivalry developing between these subject leaders. Course changes in mathematics, for example, are enabling students to access more academic and appropriate qualifications. Links are secure with local primary schools and help to raise the profile of the college within the local community.

The development of community placements in Year 10 is an innovative project that has left a lasting impression on students as they encounter the needs of different generations and groups in the locality. It is an example of the good progress that is being made in creating greater community cohesion for the college. The action plan for this is rightly based on regular feedback and audits of current work and is only now looking at the possibilities for meaningful global links.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Focus leadership and management at all levels on improving the outcomes for students – good



## External support

The college continues to benefit from links they have developed with other schools. Since the last monitoring visit, senior leaders have visited a secondary school in Oxfordshire where they were able to discuss and share good practice which successfully contributes to developing their leadership capacity. The college also benefits from the work of the School Improvement Partner who provides helpful evaluation of the progress made by the college, together with support and training where needed. The local authority continues to provide consultancy for different aspects of the college and a review has been carried out of its most recent work.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that teachers provide sufficient challenge in lessons for the more able students.
- Ensure that extension tasks in lessons provide activities that require students to work at a high enough level.