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Mr Andrew Davis
Principal
Dawlish Community College
Elm Grove Road
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EX7 0BY

Dear Mr Davis

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Dawlish Community College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your college with Paul Garvey, Additional Inspector, on 8 December 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also thank the students and the Vice Chair of the Governing Body who spent time speaking with us about their work.

At the time of the previous inspection, plans had been made to develop vocational learning facilities in closer proximity to the college, in conjunction with a local college of further education. These facilities have now opened and are fully operational.

As a result of the inspection on 16 and 17 June 2010, the college was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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

Students' progress is improving securely as a result of the systematic approach college leaders have taken to developing teachers' skills and knowledge and more personalised curriculum opportunities for students. Consequently, there has been a rapid and sustained rise in the proportion of students achieving higher grades in GCSE examinations.



Development of provision for students to practise and improve their literacy skills in subjects other than English is progressing well under the direction of the 'literacy across the curriculum' management group. Aspects of the English curriculum have been allocated to all faculties and departments so that the development of specific literacy skills is now formally planned across all areas of the curriculum. For example, the college's specialist technology faculty has taken a leading role in this initiative. Its staff have produced, in collaboration with their colleagues in the English department, resources for students that help to improve students' use of connectives (words that are used to join or extend sentences). However, while faculties and departments are generally well engaged with the planning aspects of this process, not all teachers are consistently effective in using the planned strategies routinely in their lessons.

Opportunities for students to produce extended pieces of writing have also become much more widespread under the direction and guidance of the management group. Other strategies to improve students' literacy have focused, for example, on accelerating their reading abilities through individual and small group support. These have been successful in improving reading ages of the large majority of those targeted for assistance. This has contributed to ensuring that lower attaining students increasingly have the skills they need to access work in other subjects. Additionally, the review of the whole scope of the curriculum means it takes much better account of the learning strengths and preferences of this group of students, particularly for those in Key Stage 4.

As a result, the college now provides an improved choice of subjects within four different pathways of study that can be highly personalised for individual students. As part of the applied and vocational pathways, students can elect to participate in accredited courses that give them introductions to, for example, engineering, construction trades, hairdressing and catering. A key element to this provision is the recently commissioned, high quality facility in close proximity to the college, run in conjunction with the local further education college who provide staff and teaching resources. Students' enthusiastic engagement with these courses has given an early indication of the success with which the college has improved the match of curriculum to their abilities and interests.

The college's specialist status in technology has helped to ensure that students have access to a wide range of accredited courses. For example, food technology and catering are available as vocational qualifications as well as at GCSE and AS level.

Tracking of the progress made by students who receive support for their special educational needs at school action level has become increasingly purposeful and robust. Senior leaders have established a more rigorous system to assist them in their analysis of the progress that this and other groups of students make. Consequently, there is now a more comprehensive understanding of their performance. Communication of this information has enabled staff to ensure that



their planning is better focused on how they will address and meet the needs of this group. As a result, they make as much progress as their peers in lessons, and outcomes are improving strongly. An increasing proportion make at least expected progress and go on to achieve five or more GCSE passes. The more thorough approach to planning has also begun to ensure that staff clearly identify how they provide a range of learning activities that support and challenge students of all abilities.

Those responsible for leading and managing the college continue to develop more robust approaches to evaluating the school's effectiveness. Members of the governing body, for example, have responded well to guidance and training from the local authority and have demonstrated rigorous challenge where appropriate and necessary. The college's capacity to improve has been strengthened through the appointment of appropriate staff to key positions, such as literacy coordination, and establishing monitoring systems which ensure that staff at all levels are held increasingly accountable. Middle leaders are becoming more involved in these processes and the college is now focused on improving the consistency of classroom practice.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your college. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jon Carter
Additional Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010

- Improve attainment and progress for all students in English by strengthening provision for literacy, and especially extended writing, across all subjects.
- Improve the attainment and progress of lower attaining students and those with special educational needs at the level of school action by:
 - monitoring the progress of students with special educational needs at school action level carefully against that of other groups
 - tailoring the curriculum more precisely to the needs of lower attaining students.
- Ensure that work in lessons is consistently sufficiently well adapted to offer effective support and challenge to students of all abilities.
- Strengthen the quality of self-evaluation across all areas of the college to ensure that college improvement strategies are being implemented with consistent effect.