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25 January 2013

Mrs S Brinkley  
Headteacher  
John O'Gaunt Community Technology College  
Priory Road  
Hungerford  
Berkshire  
RG17 0AN

Dear Mrs Brinkley

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to John O'Gaunt Community Technology College**

Following my visit to your school on Friday 25 January 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a school improvement adviser whose work is funded by the local authority. The school improvement plans were evaluated and other documents were scrutinised, including a review of the work of the English department, school improvement partner reports and minutes of governing body meetings.

### **Context**

Since the inspection, new heads of department have taken up post in science and the performing arts. There have been no other significant changes.

## **Main findings**

At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had already undertaken a full evaluation of the school's performance and had recognised that self-evaluation and improvement planning needed greater rigour. She has now established coherent and well-targeted actions for improvement. There is an intervention plan for under-performing departments which sets out regular, sharply-focused strategies for improvement and is integrated into processes for checking subject leaders' performance. Reviews of departments are conducted in order of priority; a review of the English department is clear and well-focused on student achievement. Expectations of how heads of department will drive improvement are clearer than in the past. There are well-focused rapid improvement plans in place for the achievement of boys and for the achievement of students in the sixth form.

The impact of measures to improve achievement is carefully measured. Senior leaders are routinely scrutinising the performance of individual students and of groups at risk of under-achievement and taking action to intervene and provide support where necessary.

The headteacher has identified the development of basic literacy skills as a key priority to improve outcomes across departments. A whole school literacy strategy is now in place, with a focus on younger students in order to help students embed basic skills early.

The governing body has a clearer understanding of its duty to monitor the achievement of different groups of students and is now doing so. This is supported by an overhaul of reporting systems to ensure that the achievement of groups, such as students eligible for pupil premium funding, is monitored and rapidly improved. Governors have audited their work in pursuit of a quality mark. This has been a useful initial tool to identify areas for further development.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- explore the possibilities of an external review of governance, as a means of supporting and strengthening the audit already underway
- use the visits of the school improvement partner to provide rigorous additional checks on progress against objectives, particularly around: progress in English; achievement in the sixth form and the capacity of middle leaders to drive improvement.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

## **External support**

The local authority is supporting the school by funding the work of the school improvement adviser. He acts as a link to other officers and is able to broker further, targeted, consultant support, in response to the headteacher's analysis of what is required. The headteacher has also arranged for a Lead Practitioner to provide mentoring and modelling of good leadership to the head of English.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for West Berkshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Christine Raeside  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**