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15 November 2006

Mr B. Davies
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Davies,

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BRIDLINGTON SCHOOL SPORTS COLLEGE

Introduction

Following my visit with Keith Brammer, Joe Clark and Chris Penter, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 14 and 15 November 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior managers, middle managers, other key staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last visit the local authority has applied through the Department for Education and Skills to set up an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to replace the governing body.

Achievement and standards

Provisional results for the 2006 National Curriculum tests and examinations show overall standards have remained broadly in line with those in 2005. Provisional results at Key Stage 3 the proportion of 14-year olds reaching the expected level for their age rose in mathematics, remained static in science and declined in English. Provisional results at Key Stage 4 the proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, and the proportion gaining five such grades including English and mathematics, remained broadly similar. However, this represents an improvement when viewed in the context of the weaker Year 11 cohort. The proportion of 16-year-olds achieving five passes at grades A* to G remained intractably low and declined to 78%. In the sixth form, the average points score per student declined, although the school's own analysis shows that students' achievements were similar to those in 2005.

Through improvements in the analysis of test and examination results, middle managers are better able to identify underperformance and prioritise actions for improvement. Teaching staff have raised expectations of what pupils can achieve and many lessons have a greater focus on learning. This has contributed to a positive change in the culture within the school.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2005:

- raise standards of achievement by tackling root causes, rather than allocating blame – satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour continues to improve because the 'relationships for learning' initiative is now better understood by teachers and pupils and is implemented more consistently. The majority of pupils are co-operative and want to learn. Behaviour was satisfactory in almost all lessons seen and good in the majority. In most lessons, very little time is lost in managing behaviour so more time is available for learning. The atmosphere around school at breaks and lunchtime is generally calm and orderly. The improving trend in exclusion rate continues, though the school's targets have not been met. However, although the figures for this term are similar to those recorded at the same point last year, current figures have been achieved during a period of zero-tolerance policy which did not operate previously. The school has recently joined a local authority initiative to further reduce fixed-term exclusions.

Attendance has improved since the last visit because of more rigorous monitoring and follow up, and the success of the new 'traffic lights' system in Year 10. Good progress has been made in reducing the number of unauthorised absences although attendance remains stubbornly below average at around 90%.

Sixth-form attendance and punctuality have improved further, reflecting more rigorous monitoring and greater parental involvement. However attendance in Year 12 is markedly better than Year 13. The ethos for learning in the sixth form is weak.

There is insufficient focus on students becoming independent learners and using study time effectively. Attitudes to learning in the sixth form are satisfactory at best.

The school has reviewed the way in which it promotes and develops pupils' basic skills and has implemented new strategies this term. These have not been established long enough to judge their impact on standards.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2005:

- manage pupils' behaviour positively and consistently so that standards rise and exclusions are significantly reduced – satisfactory progress
- improve sixth-form students' attendance to school and punctuality to lessons – good progress

Quality of provision

Improvements seen in teaching and learning have been sustained. Inspectors' judgements of the quality of teaching and learning closely correspond to those of the school, although the school appears to slightly overestimate the proportion of outstanding teaching. That teachers' expectations have risen is further evidence of the emergence a culture where learning has greater prominence. The strongest features of the teaching were good pace and a variety of learning activities. Some teachers are skilled facilitators, involving pupils actively in their learning. Many teachers make effective use of concluding plenary sessions to reflect back on the learning objectives and to check how well these have been achieved. Generally relationships are founded in mutual respect and this has helped foster more positive attitudes to learning. Weaker areas in otherwise satisfactory lessons were planning which did not reflect the wide ability range of the group and individual education plans which were not translated meaningfully into the lesson plan or the lesson. The impact of teaching assistants is variable. They are not routinely involved in lesson planning and their deployment does not have a sharp enough focus. The small amount of inadequate teaching was as a result of ineffective behaviour management, activities poorly matched to pupils' needs and a far too didactic approach with insufficient focus on learning.

Directors of learning have a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their curriculum areas and some use the outcomes of assessment very well to inform actions for improvement. Senior leaders responsible for teaching and learning and assessment have worked to consolidate improvements and achieve consistency in practice for individual teachers and between departments. They acknowledge more use could be made of the outcomes of the rigorous lesson observation programme to identify generic strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the school.

There has been good progress in curriculum development. The school's model now provides a curriculum that meets all statutory requirements with the exception of information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 11 and religious education in Year 13. However, these will phase out at the end of the current academic year.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum meets the needs of different groups well through appropriate pathways, vocational courses, college links and work placements. The specialist sports status of the college is promoted by a strong teaching department. The wider impact of this designation is evident through the numerous sports-related enrichment activities of which pupils speak positively. Innovative programmes in Year 7 have yet to be evaluated.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2005:

- improve teaching, ensuring that teachers' high expectations foster a culture of learning, success and celebration to inspire all pupils to want to come to school and do well – satisfactory progress
- ensure pupils and students have their full entitlement in ICT, citizenship and religious education and have a daily act of collective worship – good progress

Leadership and management

Since the last monitoring visit, a culture has emerged that focuses more clearly on raising standards. Regular and careful monitoring of learning and teaching by both senior and middle managers is leading to greater consistency in classroom practice, a sharper focus on progress and higher expectations of pupils' performance. Systems to track pupils' progress are now established but a systematic use of assessment information to support planning and delivery and to address the full range of individual learning needs has yet to be established. A number of other important changes, for example to the curriculum and to the management of behaviour, are becoming embedded but evaluation of their impact on standards is yet to be completed.

The new management structure has now become embedded and has been consolidated. The deputy headteachers are leading a range of improvement initiatives effectively and are beginning to evaluate their impact and plan for further changes. The directors of learning are rising to the challenge of greater responsibility and accountability for their work in monitoring and improving provision. Best practice is being shared across areas of learning but middle leaders are realistic; they appreciate significant work remains to be done to ensure a consistent approach to raising standards across the school.

At the most senior level the school still lacks the clear sense of strategic direction that is necessary to pull together, co-ordinate and prioritise the many disparate initiatives into a coherent framework focused on raising standards for all pupils. Strategic planning often concentrates on provision rather than outcomes and is not always clear about what constitutes success. The school has become more rigorous in dealing with unsatisfactory performance. The generous provision of support staff is not used as well as it could be to help with specific learning needs. The governing body is now holding the leadership of the school more closely to account and a small

governor's evaluation group meets the headteacher weekly to review progress on the school's action plan.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2005:

- ensure that all required policies and procedures are in place and implemented consistently – satisfactory progress
- ensure that managers keep track of performance rigorously, focus sharply on priorities and take speedy and effective action to deal with the weaknesses – satisfactory progress

External support

The amount of support provided by the local authority continues to be considerable. It has been effective in helping build capacity at middle leadership level. Staff report they find this support valuable. The local authority's decision to apply for an IEB to support the chair of governors is well-considered.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed

Priorities for further improvement

- Link individual initiatives into a coherent framework through better strategic leadership and management.
- Further develop the use of assessment information to plan lessons which better meet the pupils' learning needs.
- Build on recent work to promote the development of basic skills and provide learning support more effectively.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, chair of governors and the Director of Lifelong Learning for the East Riding of Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Kirby
H M Inspector