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Ms Marie McMahon  
The Headteacher  
Hodge Hill Sports and Enterprise College  
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Dear Ms McMahon

Ofsted monitoring of schools with Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your college on 20 November 2007, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and students who took part in the observations and discussions and to your chair of governors and local authority's principal adviser.

A number of changes have taken place since the last inspection. The school has become a sports and enterprise college from September 2007. Both deputy headteachers left for headships elsewhere and new appointments have been made. A new assistant headteacher has been appointed, also as a result of the promotion of the previous post holder. In addition, a change in the leadership of science took place shortly before the monitoring inspection.

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.

As a result of the inspection on 30 and 31 January 2007, the school was asked to:

- improve standards in mathematics and science by Year 9
- improve pupils' achievement in mathematics across Years 10 and 11
- improve pupils' punctuality to lessons and their attendance at school
- improve the quality of teaching by ensuring pupils learn well in lessons and that work set for pupils is well matched to their capabilities.

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

The college's results in national tests in 2007 show improvements in standards at the end of Year 9 in both mathematics and science. The percentage of students reaching Level 5 or above rose by 2% in mathematics and 4% in science, to 56% and 46% respectively. At the higher Level 6 or above, mathematics saw no change from the previous year, with 29% of students achieving this level, but science saw a 4% rise to 14% of students achieving this level. The college's internal assessment data suggest that gains will be greater over this school year and that the college will meet its challenging targets for these subjects in 2008.

In the area of greater underachievement, mathematics in Years 10 and 11, the college has made more significant progress. The proportion of students gaining a GCSE grade in mathematics rose by 16% to 83%, and the proportion gaining a higher A\* to C grade rose by 7% to 25% in 2007. The college's interim assessments show that the current Year 11 is likely to meet its target for 2008 of 39% of students gaining a grade A\* to C. The college has taken a number of steps to improve achievement in Years 10 and 11. In particular, an increased number of teaching groups in Year 11 has reduced class sizes and allowed teachers to provide more individual attention in lessons.

The key reason behind these improved standards in both key stages is that the college has introduced effective strategies to improve teaching and learning in all years and provide specific support for those who need it. The local authority has provided substantial support and, although its statement of action was not sufficiently detailed, the college's own plan is good and builds in a range of external support. Staff have valued highly both the support they have received from the senior leadership team and the external input. In mathematics and science, the college has almost eliminated inadequate teaching. Some satisfactory teaching observed had elements that could well have been developed into good practice. Students recognise the improvements in teaching and learning that have taken place since the last inspection, noting in particular improvements in teaching skills and in the quality of support they receive from supply teachers. They also note the greater confidence they have in learning mathematics, although this is still an issue, especially in Year 11.

The use of common planning sheets has led to a greater emphasis on learning objectives and lesson structures. The more recent focus on plenary sessions at the ends of lessons has seen improvements in the way students review their learning. In mathematics and science, too little attention is given in some plans to matching tasks to the needs of the full range of students. Some planning also does not focus enough on the activity that students will undertake in the middle section of lessons, resulting in too much teacher input and not enough student engagement. A range of well implemented monitoring strategies in all subjects builds on accurate assessments of teaching and learning by senior leaders and, increasingly, middle leaders. This is supported by a school wide set of expectations for lessons. These matched the college's needs well at the time of the last inspection but do not now have sufficient

focus on the sorts of activities that will engage students fully in the middle section of lessons.

The college's processes for setting and reviewing students' targets are good. Students generally know the level they are working at and what they have to do to meet their targets. Targets are set and reviewed thoroughly at meetings involving student, parent and staff and, where predictions using the most challenging national benchmark seem too low, these are adjusted upward to provide a good level of challenge for students. Students' books contain clear notes from their teachers in mathematics and science indicating what they need to do to improve their work. The college's processes for tracking achievement and identifying any underachievement amongst individual students are good, and departments are held to account for students' results. The college's 'state of the nation' analysis undertaken to identify any teaching groups where additional support might be needed is also good. The inclusion of measures of the progress made by different groups of students would sharpen the college's analyses further.

The college has put in place a range of strategies to improve attendance. The 'Wise up' programme of rewards for high attendance is popular with students, and data show that the attendance of half the college's students is currently above 97%. Attendance has improved overall and is now 92%. Sanctions for lateness have also reduced morning lateness from 3% in the first half of the summer term 2006 to 1% in the first half of the autumn term 2007. Calls home from behaviour coordinators and text messages on parents' mobile phones have also had a positive impact. A much increased staff profile at lesson changeover has also reduced the number of students who come late to lessons, although the distance between the college's two buildings and their layout mean that some loss of learning time is inevitable.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your college.

Yours sincerely

Frank Knowles  
Additional Inspector