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26 November 2010

Mr Gary Garghan
Headteacher
Howden School and Technology College
Derwent Road
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Dear Mr Garghan

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Howden School and Technology College

Following my visit with Julie Price-Grimshaw, Linda Murphy and Peter McKay, additional inspectors, to your school on 24 and 25 November 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2010. The areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory
Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for the East Riding of Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that all students, regardless of their academic ability, make at least satisfactory progress, by:
 - improving the use of assessment so that all students are provided with activities which are challenging and meet their needs and interests
 - focusing on eradicating low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons through developing teaching so that all is at least satisfactory and the majority is good.
- Develop leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that monitoring results in actions which are clear and have a positive impact in sustaining improved outcomes for students.
- Improve the robustness of safeguarding policies, procedures and systems so that:
 - monitoring is rigorous and effective
 - actions taken are followed through and their impact is recorded
 - all students feel safe.

Special measures: monitoring of Howden School and Technology College

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 November 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the acting headteacher, other staff, students and representatives of the governing body.

Context

Following the inspection in June 2010 the headteacher resigned in July. An experienced headteacher and his deputy were appointed as executive headteacher and acting headteacher for the school year 2010/11. They took up post in the last week of the summer term 2010. The executive headteacher spends approximately half the week in school. An assistant headteacher and four teachers left at the end of the summer term. A new assistant headteacher and three newly qualified teachers appointed by the previous headteacher took up post in September. There is a new Chair of Governors and six new governors on the governing body.

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

Since the last inspection, Ofsted has published a report on the achievement of Year 11 students in the GCSE or equivalent courses taken in the summer term 2010. This report showed that attainment, which was judged average at the last inspection, was below average in summer 2010. The proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, fell from 49% to 45%, while it rose nationally. The proportion of students gaining two GCSEs at grades A* to C in science fell significantly. In 2010, students performed less well in English and mathematics than they did in their other subjects. Overall, students made worse progress in 2010 than the Year 11 pupils did in 2009. They made poorer progress in English and mathematics than their counterparts in previous years. Students across the ability range underachieved.

The new school leaders acknowledge and understand the reasons for the poor progress and lower attainment by last year's Year 11. They have begun to take steps to improve the learning and progress of current students. A new assessment and monitoring system has been introduced which measures the attainment and progress of students more frequently and systematically. This shows a step-by-step improvement in the achievement of the current Year 11 from the baseline measure in June when they were in Year 10. The school's assessment of their progress indicates that they may be on target to make better progress in the GCSE examinations in 2011. Internal assessments by the English and mathematics

departments in 2010 were reasonably accurate in predicting GCSE outcomes and support the reliability of the current Year 11 forecasts.

Previous school targets were low and set low expectations. The school has introduced a new system for setting and monitoring targets for students. In Years 10 and 11 students are now expected to make at least the same progress as students in similar schools. In Years 7, 8 and 9 students have been set more ambitious targets. Students already appreciate the direction provided by the increased frequency of assessment and the clearer information about the progress they are expected to make during the year towards their end-of-year target. The documentation for the new target-setting system is clear, well presented and accessible for staff, students and their parents. However, the school is not secure about the accuracy of its assessment at Key Stage 3 and does not have procedures for their internal or external verification.

The new leaders have introduced a common approach to lesson planning. Observation in lessons during the monitoring visit showed that teachers are making more use of objectives to improve the direction and guidance for learners. The use of starters and plenary sessions has improved the quality of lesson planning and introduced more structure to lessons. Students value the greater variety of tasks and the more consistent quality of learning. In a minority of lessons assessment criteria are not used to set challenges for students, planning of tasks is not sufficiently detailed and the sequence of activity does not systematically develop specific skills or understanding. In the great majority of lessons students' conduct is at least satisfactory and often good. There is a culture of off-task behaviour in lessons where teachers provide insufficient direction for the learning or where the teaching is dull and teacher dominated. This affects students of all abilities and leads to their continuing lack of progress in some lessons. Student interviews and school records of behaviour incidents indicate that the amount of this sort of low-level disruption has reduced this term, though it has not been eradicated.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Ensure that all students, regardless of their academic ability, make at least satisfactory progress, by:
 - improving the use of assessment so that all students are provided with activities which are challenging and meet their needs and interests
 - focusing on eradicating low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons through developing teaching so that all is at least satisfactory and the majority is good.

Satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance improved in 2010 from average to above average. School records show that attendance in the first half of this term was higher than the equivalent term last year. Exclusions are also very much lower in the first half of this term and the number of students sent out of lessons has also reduced very significantly. This is the result of improved teaching, a new on-call system for supporting staff in lessons and the creation of a learning zone which supports vulnerable students. Attitudes to learning vary but students are almost always compliant and often show enthusiasm. Most students feel safe, value the relationship with the pastoral team and tutors, and are increasingly confident that robust action will be taken by staff.

The effectiveness of provision

An intensive programme of training has established a school model of what constitutes a good lesson and this has increased the consistency and quality of lesson planning and teaching. Over 100 lesson observations carried out by senior leaders and local authority consultants have provided the school with a good understanding of the overall quality of teaching and the areas for improvement. Twenty nine lessons were observed during the inspection. Most lessons were satisfactory, a majority were good, a few were inadequate and one was outstanding. The evaluations in the inspection broadly match those of the school and the local authority, and demonstrate satisfactory progress towards a school target of 100% satisfactory teaching. The school's programme of observations has enabled senior leaders to identify individuals with weaknesses and a programme of tailored support has been in place for seven teachers.

There are signs that teaching is beginning to improve and this a view shared by students. The common approach to planning has provided greater consistency in teaching and an increased variety of activities in lessons. The majority of lessons seen included a statement of learning objectives, a starter activity and a summative review of learning. In the best lessons different tiers of learning were set as minimum expectations for individual pupils according to their target grades or levels. Overall, however, teachers are not making sufficient use of assessment criteria and grades to match work in a more precisely tailored way. There is also some confusion about the purpose of learning objectives and outcomes, with an over-emphasis on what students are to do. Only rarely do teachers specify clearly and unequivocally the skills and understanding the students are to acquire and how they will show this. The school acknowledges the need for greater expertise and consistency in these aspects of teaching and has prioritised them as areas for improvement.

The leaders have introduced a new pastoral structure which links pastoral and academic guidance in order to provide more comprehensive and accessible support for students. All staff have undertaken online training in safeguarding. The new

pastoral managers are due to be trained as child protection officers in the near future. Peer mentors in Year 10 have been trained to provide support for vulnerable students in Years 7 and 8, and have started their role. Students in these year groups already say that they value the support from the peer mentors. A survey of the current Year 7 shows that students feel safe and know who to turn to for help. Assemblies in anti-bullying week have reinforced the school's commitment to anti-bullying. Older students also feel safe, though some expressed a wish for further reassurance that action will be taken promptly when issues arise, for example, on the school buses. The school has responded to student concern about the inconsistencies in the way teachers deal with misbehaviour. Leaders have involved students in the development of a new behaviour policy through a strengthened school council known as the senate. Student members of the senate feel that they have been thoroughly involved in this process and share ownership of the new system to be introduced to the whole school in the week following this monitoring inspection. During the visit the headteacher was observed giving an effective presentation of the new behaviour and rewards policy to Year 10. The school has plans for a student survey on the effectiveness of actions taken to make students feel safe.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Improve the robustness of safeguarding policies, procedures and systems so that:
 - monitoring is rigorous and effective
 - actions taken are followed through and their impact is recorded
 - all students feel safe.

Satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The senior leadership team has been restructured and roles and responsibilities have been more clearly defined. Systems of line management and accountability are clearer and more formal. Staff morale has improved. This is reflected in reduced levels of staff absence during the first half of this term. Staff and students find senior leaders more accessible and responsive. This is beginning to build trust and confidence in the ability to change and improve. The implementation of school improvement plans is developing at a good pace with a weekly programme of action and a record of implementation which is regularly reviewed and documented. The senior leaders have been prompt and thorough in reviewing the effectiveness of subject departments. Most have been reviewed and others will be completed shortly. Within this process senior leaders have conducted lesson observations and interviewed subject leaders and students. Their evaluations make clear and accurate judgements about weaknesses and emerging strengths and identify areas for

improvement. Most departments have been correctly judged inadequate by the school, due to the lack of progress made by students. There are inadequacies in the self-evaluation by key subject leaders. The heads of English and mathematics explained the poor progress by students in their subject as being primarily due to the lack of motivation by students. Action plans have not been formulated for each of the weaker departments. The school has not yet linked the outcomes of students' progress as reflected in tracking data to the evaluation of departments. Milestones to measure the progress of subjects or year groups on a termly basis have not been specified.

The use and management of data are improving. A new system for gathering, recording and analysing data as well as setting targets has just been introduced. The school is introducing a wider range of benchmarks to analyse the progress of different groups of students. Most staff had little access to or responsibility for data until recently. A training programme has been planned to increase their capabilities and there is a good planned take-up from staff.

A new monitoring and evaluation committee has been set up by the governing body to scrutinise the progress of the school. There is now a greater delegation of the leadership of committees. Governors are better informed about school performance and receive departmental evaluation reports and reports from local authority review visits. They have received training in asking challenging questions and in understanding the use of data and external benchmarks.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Develop leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that monitoring results in actions which are clear and have a positive impact in sustaining improved outcomes for students.

Satisfactory.

External support

The local authority statement of action was evaluated and amendments were required to quantify targets and link them to milestones so that reviews and evaluations can identify clearly how well the school is working towards the targets. The statement of action has been amended and now fit for purpose and meets these requirements.

The School Improvement Partner resigned in October 2010 and has been replaced by a new School Improvement Partner who is due to visit the school shortly.

The local authority has provided additional governors, good support for the new data-management system, and well-received training on how to deliver a good or

better lesson. Local authority consultants are also providing support for staff identified as needing additional support. The local authority carried out a review of the school which provided the school with a helpful external view on the quality of teaching and use of assessment. The school is linked as a 'Gaining Ground' school from September 2010 with Wolfreton High School where the executive headteacher and acting headteacher have their substantive posts. This has started to build development links at middle management level.