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18 November 2011

Mr C Currie
Interim Headteacher
Brighton Hill Community College
Brighton Way
Basingstoke
Hampshire
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Dear Mr Currie

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Brighton Hill Community College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 17 November 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also convey my thanks to the students, the Chair and additional members of the interim executive board and the local authority's district manager.

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has entered retirement, and the school is being led by an interim headteacher. The local authority applied to the Secretary of State to replace the governing body with an interim executive board, which came into effect on 1 September 2011. The number on roll has declined, particularly in the current Year 7. The roles of the senior leadership team were redefined in October 2011.

As a result of the inspection on 23 and 24 March 2011, the school 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 school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 rose slightly in 2011, with 60% of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics; however, this remains below the school's target. The school responded satisfactorily to improving learning and progress for these students, bearing in mind the short time they had left in school, and achievement for these students remained broadly in line with that of the previous cohort. Analysis of current available data for Year 11

indicates that progress towards attainment targets remains variable, and is dependent on the quality of teaching, with better progress being made in music, drama and German.

Baselines are being better established by ensuring that all students in Year 7 sit cognitive ability tests, and students of any age identified with significant gaps in their reading ages are being targeted to narrow the gaps. The school can point to some good examples where reading ages have improved significantly over a short period of time. A programme of academic mentoring for up to 30 Year 11 students at risk of underachieving is underway and faculties have implemented student progress review meetings. School leaders have revised the system for target setting which was previously weak and unreliable, and a more sophisticated system now generates targets which are realistic but nevertheless challenging. These targets are informed by a more refined student progress tracking system. However, not all students are making expected progress because some teachers are not making best use of information provided on students' achievement when planning for learning. The director of studies for mathematics demonstrated a secure understanding of how to raise standards, and a lesson observed with high attaining students provided evidence that in that particular case, their needs were being ably met. Students at risk of underachieving in mathematics have been successfully identified and targeted with one-to-one intervention, and cross-curricular numeracy projects target all students through whole-school 'Olympic Days'.

The quality of teaching is variable, with some that is inadequate. In joint lesson observations, the inspector agreed with senior leaders' judgements. During a walk around the school with the interim headteacher, some teachers were observed making effective use of questioning to test for understanding, to which students responded positively. In other cases, teachers' use of questioning is less effective and there are missed opportunities to pursue topics which would build on previous learning and develop students' thinking skills. Marking of students' work was often detailed and helpful but there remain instances where students' work is left unmarked over a considerable period of time. The support offered by lead practitioners to 11 teachers whose teaching is judged to be satisfactory is starting to demonstrate impact, and roles of teaching assistants are being enhanced through appropriately targeted training. A new behaviour policy has recently been ratified by the interim executive board and is in the process of being disseminated to staff. Good behaviour is encouraged in all lessons, but the implementation of the policy is not yet consistent. Where teaching is better, there is a correlation with good behaviour because students are challenged and therefore engaged in their learning. In some lessons, students' good behaviour accelerates their rate of progress because they are enthused and motivated to succeed, whereas in others, inappropriate behaviour acts as a barrier to progress, which students say they find frustrating.

The interim executive board, although appointed later than originally planned, has very quickly set about making clear its high expectations in its mission to drive up

standards. Members' wealth of experience of governance and working in schools facing similar challenges has established a solid starting point from which to improve. The interim executive board has formed very effective links with parents and carers. They have correctly prioritised matters which will move the school on at a secure and swift pace, and scrutiny of minutes of meetings demonstrates their ability to challenge through pertinent questioning and to secure points for action within tight deadlines.

The school's specialist sports college status plays an important role in developing students' self-esteem and leadership skills. Teaching in core physical education lessons is effective and the faculty has also contributed to the successful development of students' social skills through the provision of activities during tutor time, as well as to the development of mathematical and numeracy skills through cross-curricular projects.

Leaders and managers are committed to making improvements at a rapid rate and many recent initiatives have been put in place to enable this to happen. However, they also recognise that time is required to embed systems in order to measure for impact on students' outcomes. The interim headteacher and his team have accurately analysed the school's existing strengths and areas for development and have galvanised staff's enthusiasm in tackling key issues head-on. The decision to conduct a skills audit within the senior leadership team and redefine roles according to strengths demonstrates a determination to effect change, putting the needs of students first. The key indicators of progress in the school's action plan are linked to improvement, although measurements of success are not always quantifiable.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose. The school values the support it has been offered though the effective use of consultants to support the teaching of mathematics, to develop a better understanding of the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and to make better use of data when setting academic targets for students.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2011

- Improve the overall achievement of all groups of students, particularly those of lower ability, and raise achievement in mathematics.
- Reduce the variability in teaching by ensuring that, in all lessons:
 - teachers use skilled questioning to engage and challenge students, enabling them to achieve more
 - teachers make consistent use of the behaviour policy.
- Ensure that the governing body provides appropriate challenge to the school's leaders, focusing on key areas of achievement and the quality of teaching.