

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



18 March 2008

Miss V Matthews
The Principal
Bideford College
Abbotsham Road
Bideford
Devon
EX39 3AR

Dear Miss Matthews

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with my colleague Mary Massey HMI on 6 March 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on our thanks to those students who spoke with us and those teachers whose lessons we briefly visited. In particular we are grateful to the staff and governors who met with us during the day for discussions on the work of the college.

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 29 and 30 November 2006, the college was asked to

- increase levels of challenge and the amount of active learning in lessons, and plan better to meet pupils' individual needs, especially in Key Stage 4 and among boys
- bring a greater level of challenge and robustness to the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure a more consistent approach
- target the work of the leadership group on the school's highest priorities to increase its capacity to bring about improvements in standards
- focus the college's self-evaluation process on the impact of the actions taken rather than the provision made.

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 pupils' achievement.

The college had significant success in 2007 in raising the standards and progress of students in Key Stage 3 and was placed twenty first in the table of most improved secondary schools published by the Department for Children Schools and Families.

The college has good tracking and analysis of the students' progress in Key Stage 4 where they confidently anticipate an improvement to their results in 2008. A number of strategies to tackle boys' underperformance are being implemented and, whilst these are beginning to have some success in Key Stage 3, they are yet to be fully embedded in Key Stage 4.

The monitoring of teaching and learning is now much better focused on learning. Challenge and support are given to teachers proportionate to their need. The college has set itself a highly aspirational target of all observed lessons being good by April 2008. There has been considerable progress in improving the quality of observed lessons since the previous inspection. Some teachers are still to ensure they implement consistently the college expectations for the management of lessons. Whilst some of the pupils reported ongoing concerns about low level disruption in their lessons, they agreed that this had declined. The establishment of a class for underachieving boys in Key Stage 4 has contributed to this reduction in disruption and helped to restore the motivation of students that might otherwise have become disaffected.

The leadership group has been sensibly restructured with three vice principals appointed in September 2007. The team is confident and capable and the capacity of the college to improve has been substantially increased because of this. The middle managers have also increased their capacity to improve the college through their clear understanding of their roles and the high and consistent expectations that the leadership group have of them. The governing body is well informed about the work of the college and has enough information to ensure that it challenges the leadership group as well as support it.

By working effectively with the local authority on the college improvement plan, a clear set of priorities has been established for the short and longer term. The processes of gathering evidence for the school's self-evaluation, for example in observations of teaching and learning, are now more focused on outcomes for pupils. However, in drawing together a full picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses, the self-evaluation form still has too much of the recent history of the college. It remains more focused on provision rather than outcomes when making its judgments on the school's performance and so is over generous in some sections.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Kara
Her Majesty's Inspector