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17 February 2011

Mrs K Barton  
Headteacher  
Up Holland High School  
Sandbrook Road  
Orrell  
Wigan  
Lancashire  
WN5 7AL

Dear Mrs Barton,

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Up Holland High School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 16 February 2011 and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass my thanks on to the Chair of the Governing Body, the representative of the local authority and the Junior Leadership Team who all gave up their time to talk to me about the school's progress.

As a result of the inspection in May 2010, 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.

GCSE results in 2010 showed little improvement on those of 2009. Attainment was broadly average and students' achievement was inadequate overall. The school has implemented a broad range of strategies to improve achievement. A new, accessible, robust system for tracking students' progress towards their challenging targets has been established and is pivotal in this drive. Staff are able to identify students who are underachieving and take steps to improve their progress. Students and their parents and carers receive clearer information, more frequently, about rates of progress so that they are better placed to work in partnership with the school. The school's data show that it expects to meet its target for the proportion of students gaining at least five good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, this summer. However, although the school's performance is improving against other measures, it does not expect to reach all its targets.

Shortfalls in performance in the school's specialist areas of mathematics and music were identified at the time of the previous inspection. The new leader in mathematics has rapidly introduced a range of initiatives to improve provision and accelerate students' progress, particularly by making learning fun and relevant. There is a sharp, but far from exclusive, focus on improving outcomes for Year 11. Early entry for a GCSE has proved helpful in

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increasing students' confidence and providing a firm basis for targeted teaching and support to improve their final grades. Through links with a local college, specialised provision is being made for the most able. Students are enthusiastic about the 'Maths Academy' provided weekly after school and attend in large numbers. Staff are benefiting from the expertise of a number of local schools with outstanding practice in mathematics. Based on the school's data, a marked rise in good GCSE passes, including those at the highest grades, is expected this year. Developments in music are less secure.

A concerted and well-led drive to raise the quality of teaching is paying dividends. Both the school's monitoring and that of the local authority show that there has been a significant improvement in the proportion of lessons which are at least good. The drive and professionalism of the critical difference team in seeking improvement through, for example, leading training sessions and sharing advice, has had a significant impact on the determination of staff to extend their classroom repertoire. The synergy between the work of this group and that of senior leaders in introducing coaching, reflective practice, joint observations and the filming of lessons, has accelerated the pace of improvement. Nevertheless, some inadequate practice remains.

Common features of the lessons observed during this inspection were: good relationships between students and between adults and students; positive attitudes to learning; disciplined listening; and prompt attention to instructions. Characteristics of the better lessons were: high expectations; a brisk pace; challenging activities; effective use of praise; well-targeted questioning; and opportunities for students to learn independently. Where lessons were less successful, work was not well enough planned to meet the differing abilities of the students. The pace was slow and questions did not explore the depth of students' understanding. The quality of marking and feedback to students is very variable. The school has some good practice on which to build and recognises that more work is needed to establish a consistent approach in this area.

The headteacher is providing a forthright and open lead to the school's improvement. Expectations are high and there is a suitably robust approach to underperformance. Leaders at all levels are now better placed to discharge their responsibilities. Senior leaders have clear remits and lines of accountability are in place. Middle leaders know what is expected of them and there has been a range of well-received training to support them in fulfilling their roles. Through more systematic approaches to the analysis of data, action planning, monitoring, and evaluation, middle leaders are making a much more pertinent, though still variable, contribution to the school's improvement. The school is making very effective use of a wide range of partnerships with outstanding providers to extend the experience, understanding and expertise of staff across an array of areas.

The local authority's statement of action and action plan are fit for purpose. The headteacher has welcomed the well-judged support provided by the local authority adviser and the School Improvement Partner. This has been well matched to the school's needs and is reducing markedly as improvements embed.

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

Mrs Jane Austin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 20-21 May 2010**

- Raise achievement so that the outcomes are at least commensurate with students' capabilities especially:
  - in mathematics and music
  - for more-able students so that more high grades are attained.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is good or better by:
  - raising expectations
  - increasing the pace of lessons
  - ensuring that teaching and the work set are well matched with the different abilities of students so that they can achieve their potential
  - ensuring that students are actively involved in their own learning
  - improving the guidance given to students on how to improve their work and achieve higher levels and grades.
  
- Develop leadership and management skills at senior and middle leadership level by:
  - ensuring that there are clear responsibilities for the management of strategies to raise achievement including strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning
  - involving leaders fully in self-evaluation and in driving improvements in their areas of responsibility.