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Mr Andy Pollard
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Pollard

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Haydock Sports College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 January 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during the inspection. Also, thank you to the students who spoke to the inspectors, to the Chair of the governing body and to representatives from the local authority with whom meetings were held.

Since the school's last inspection, following the retirement of the headteacher, a new headteacher was appointed on 1 September 2010. Additionally, two assistant headteachers left the school at the end of August 2010. These two senior posts were not replaced and their responsibilities have been redistributed amongst existing staff in a significant restructure of the senior leadership team.

As a result of the inspection in December 2009, 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 has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The provisional results of the school's GCSE examinations in 2010 show improvement to the percentage of students gaining A*-C grades in English and/or mathematics. The percentage of students gaining the top A*/A grades in mathematics remains about the same as in 2009. The percentage gaining A*/A grades in English is much improved. Overall, the percentage gaining 5 A*-C grades including English and mathematics in 2010 is improved on the previous year. The results show that the attainment of all groups of students improved compared to

September 2010



2009. Data showing the amount of progress made by students present a mixed picture. The GCSE results indicate similar progress to the previous cohort of students. However, school and local authority data shows improving rates of progress especially in Key Stage 4 in the current academic year. Observations by inspectors in lessons confirm that rates of progress are beginning to improve.

Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, highlighted in the last inspection report, are being tackled by much improved monitoring by the school's leadership. This demonstrates the school's better capacity for sustained improvement. The headteacher has quickly galvanised the new senior leadership team who have developed regular and systematic departmental monitoring and evaluation. Each week the heads of department hold 'collaborative' meetings with all teachers to discuss the quality of teaching. Focus groups of teachers meet every half term to evaluate the outcomes of lesson observations. The senior leadership team receives reports on these meetings and is now better informed about the quality of teaching. Analysis of this monitoring shows that the proportion of good lessons is improving. Lesson observations made by inspectors during this monitoring visit support the school's view and show that the quality of teaching is improving. Characteristics of lessons seen are the good behaviour of students and their positive attitudes to learning. There are good relationships between students and the staff. In many lessons, students are given lots of opportunities for discussion and they collaborate well and learn from each other. Teachers have good questioning skills and use these well to build students' learning and to extend their understanding. The use of computers to interest students and to enrich their experiences is improving and many students spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about how much they enjoy learning in this way.

Although the overall quality of teaching is improving, inconsistencies remain in the rate of progress being made by students. This is because there is significant variation in the quality of teachers' marking, in the use of data to inform what students will learn and in the expectations of teachers about how much students should learn in a given time. The targets set by the school for students' attainment are too low, especially at Key Stage 3. As a result, while teachers are improving their skills to teach lessons in interesting and engaging ways, this is not fully translating into better progress for students and, therefore, higher standards.

The school does not have a clear, agreed policy for marking students' work and in this regard there is too little progress since the last inspection. In books seen by inspectors, some work was left unmarked and this consequently devalues the worth of students' efforts. Most work is marked, but the quality of marking is variable, meaning that students are sometimes unclear about what they need to do to improve. Teachers plan lessons conscientiously and to an agreed set of headings. This has improved since the last inspection. Nevertheless, not all plans set out the expectations for students' learning, concentrating rather on describing the activities which will be provided for students. Most teachers include performance data in their planning and are knowledgeable about the attainment levels of the students.



However, the targets set for students learning are too low and result in insufficient expectations for students' progress in some lessons.

The school has an established and detailed set of data showing the attainment of students and the targets set for future achievement. The tracking of students' progress towards these targets is regular and secure. The school is reviewing the long established basis for the setting of targets and acknowledges the urgency of this. Currently, the expectations that arise from these targets are too low. Students are on track to achieve them, but this will result in students reaching standards which are below their capabilities.

The impact of the school's specialist sports status on the school's overall performance is improving. The physical education department enables students to achieve GCSE grades which are well above the national average. A number of initiatives have been put in place since the last inspection, which are improving students' literacy skills through their involvement in physical education. For example, Year 10 students act as literacy leaders for Year 7 students. They provide sport activities before school, join younger students for breakfast at the club and then assist them with reading activities. Students say that as well as improving their reading skills, they have more personal confidence and improved self-esteem as a result of taking part.

The local authority provides effective support to the school through a range of advisers and the School Improvement Partner.

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 Coleman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2009

- Increase the percentage of students gaining good grades at GCSE in English and mathematics.
- Share good practice across the curriculum so that inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning are tackled and all students have the opportunity to engage in challenging learning. In particular ensure:
 - that marking in all subjects gives a clear indication to students of what they need to do to improve
 - the effective use of data for lesson planning
 - the imaginative use of information and communication technology (ICT) to promote active learning.
- Improve managers' use of data to identify and tackle underperformance more speedily so that attainment can be driven up more rapidly.