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Mrs Anne Hendon-John
Headteacher
The Polygon School
Handel Terrace
Southampton
Hampshire
SO15 2FH

Dear Mrs Hendon-John

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of The Polygon School

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 planning discussions and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to all of the students, but especially those who took the time to talk to me and contributed a great deal to the inspection.

The senior leadership team has been restructured since the last inspection with a number of new appointments and clearly defined roles.

As a result of the inspection on 25 November 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Students have clear aspirations for success in examinations and for their future careers, valuing the wide range of opportunities provided by the school. Although attainment remains low, students are increasingly successful in gaining nationally accredited awards including GCSE, Entry Level and ASDAN. The school tracks students' progress with increasing accuracy and rigour and is implementing well-thought-out plans to make more strategic use of progress data. The school contributes a great deal to students' academic and personal achievements. Students generally take responsibility for their own behaviour and so there is a very positive, respectful and happy atmosphere in the school. A clear example of how attitudes to learning have been developed is apparent when talking to students. Students in Year



11, for example, are looking forward to GCSEs, college courses and further learning opportunities. They talk with enthusiasm about their future plans.

Staff in the school know the students very well and the school community works well together to ensure students' success. There is a clear contribution by all staff to achieving ambitious school goals. The senior leaders in the school have clear responsibilities and there is a high level of accountability with all staff. The school has been successful in maintaining attendance rates despite the reduced resources available from the local authority. Many individuals significantly increase their participation in learning when they come to the Polygon School as they can see the real benefits to themselves in getting involved and contributing to the school community.

A range of lessons was observed. Progress during these lessons for many students was good or outstanding. Teachers plan lessons well and demonstrated a highly attuned understanding of behaviour management strategies to ensure learning was not interrupted and all students could contribute to lessons. In the best lessons, teachers ensured that students were active, there was a clear purpose, and a relevant context using real-life examples and personal experiences to reinforce learning. During most lessons, students made at least good progress. When the pace of learning was slower, some students were not challenged enough and classroom support staff were not used as well.

The school is proactive in developing opportunities to meet the needs of individuals and so the curriculum is developing very well. This has included work placements that are tailored to students' aspirations and specialist trips. For example, a school ski trip and a field trip to Iceland are planned to broaden horizons and extend learning outside the classroom.

The local authority advisors have worked with the school to improve provision and particularly in developing strategies for addressing attendance issues without a dedicated education welfare officer. The school is developing a wide range of partners particularly in the local community, such as local businesses, to develop high quality opportunities for students. Links with other schools contribute well to the school's development.

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

Paul Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can by:
 - developing and implementing effective systems for tracking their progress and using this information in teachers' planning to clearly identify pupils' needs and how these will be met
 - implementing the planned appointment of a literacy teacher.

- Establish more effective links between the systems for monitoring and evaluating separate aspects of the provision so that a clear picture of each individual's performance, as well as that of the school as a whole, can be demonstrated.

- Consult with the local authority to reappoint an on-site education welfare officer to support the school in raising attendance.