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11 February 2011

Mr N Fox
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Fox

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 10 February 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I should be grateful if you could also pass on my thanks to the students and to the chair of the governing body who gave up their time to speak to me.

Since the previous inspection the school has now become oversubscribed and attracts more students from the local area. A new dining facility, including an internet café for the sixth form, has just been constructed and is ready to open in mid-February.

As a result of the inspection on 16 September 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.

Following the previous inspection, students' attainment rose in 2010, although it remained below the national average for the percentage of students achieving five or more good GCSE grades both without and with mathematics at 64% and 50%. Attainment in mathematics rose by 6% and contributed to average attainment overall. Progress made in all subjects by most students has been below average, apart from the minority who are known to be eligible for free school meals, have



English as an additional language or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities at school action plus level. Current available data indicate that attainment is set to rise again in 2011. The introduction of more refined systems for carefully tracking student progress is starting to have an impact in the raising of standards but this is not yet significant. Some intervention strategies are in place, particularly for students in Key Stages 3 and 4, who receive carefully targeted support and guidance.

The smarter use of data amongst middle and senior leaders is becoming established practice and is used to set challenging targets for all students. Many students are aware of their levels and some can articulate how to move up to the next level. The quality of written feedback in students' books is variable and does not always support students in improving the quality of their work. Regular meetings between leaders and managers to discuss students' progress in relation to their targets are now in place. Although data are also made available to all subject teachers, some teachers are not yet making best use of this information when planning lessons, particularly for high-attaining students. Lesson plans do not always address the needs of different groups of students and activities experienced by students in lessons do not always support good progress.

Lesson observations carried out by the inspection team confirm that the quality of teaching varies between satisfactory and good, with good behaviour observed in all lessons. Senior leaders exercise accurate judgement when observing lessons, although information recorded on lesson observation forms does not place a great enough emphasis on the quality of learning that is taking place but concentrates more on what activities students are doing. In the most successful lessons, students' good behaviour and teachers' effective use of assessment and additional resources allow them to make expected progress. In the weaker lessons, there is a lack of pace and teaching is still targeted at the whole group through one common task. These lessons are too teacher-led and students are not empowered to take responsibility for their own learning.

The school has worked hard to improve the quality of the school environment and an ongoing refurbishment programme is now in place. The new school canteen is a welcome addition to the school's facilities. Corridors are adorned with displays of students' work, but this is not updated on a regular basis.

The headteacher's vision for the school is shared by staff, who show great commitment towards seeking school improvement. Senior leaders have clear roles and responsibilities and a review of these has enhanced the quality of monitoring. For example, one senior leader has responsibility for monitoring aspects of provision including, most recently, care guidance and support and mathematics, and a review of the school library is imminent. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this role on student outcomes. Another senior leader has addressed weaknesses in the curriculum and the use of data, which has resulted in the creation of curriculum pathways to better cater for students' needs. Middle leaders, some of whom are



recent appointments, are held more to account and produce a termly report which identifies priorities for improvement. School self-evaluation processes are satisfactory and, while the school improvement plan identifies key priorities for the school, it does not indicate success criteria. Members of the governing body have been proactive in responding to the issues raised in the previous inspection report. Many of the recent initiatives being implemented, particularly those since September 2010, have raised expectations and have increased ownership of responsibility, but as yet it is too early to assess the impact of these on raising standards.

The school's specialist subjects are making a positive contribution towards improving student outcomes and students benefit from participating in activities such as the recent production of *Oliver*, which increases self-confidence and self-esteem. The school welcomes the support offered by the School Improvement Partner, who has helped it to identify areas for improvement through her analysis of documentation and by monitoring, in particular, the quality of teaching and learning.

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 September 2009

- By September 2010, through robust monitoring and evaluation, ensure that the systems senior leaders have implemented to promote improved outcomes for students have a significant impact, particularly on their attainment.
- Ensure that middle leaders use data to challenge teachers on the achievement of their students in order to promote consistency within and between departments.
- Raise standards and achievement, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring students consistently experience high quality teaching and learning.
- Raise teachers' expectation of what students can achieve by ensuring assessment information is used to plan lessons that challenge all learners, particularly the higher attaining.
- Ensure teachers are skilled in checking students' understanding within lessons in order to provide teaching that best matches their needs.
- Ensure all teachers are effective in using behaviour management strategies which promote good behaviour for learning.
- Improve the physical environment in order to promote students' personal development and well-being; in particular, ensure students have access to suitable dining facilities.