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29 November 2010

Mrs M Sparrow  
The Headteacher  
Wexham School  
Norway Drive  
Slough  
Berkshire  
SL2 5QP

Dear Mrs Sparrow

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Wexham School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Janet Simms, additional inspector, on 17 November 2010, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, the students, the chair of the governing body and the School Improvement Partner and who gave up their time to talk to me.

Since the last inspection and following the retirement of the headteacher, a new headteacher was appointed with effect from September 2010. In the interim period one of the deputy headteachers took on the role of acting headteacher. The number on roll has increased since the previous inspection as the school now admits an extra form of entry in Year 7, a change which came into effect from September 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 9 and 10 December 2008, 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 inadequate progress in making improvement and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Following the previous inspection, students' attainment remained significantly below the national average in 2009 for the percentage of students achieving five or more good GCSE grades both without and with English and mathematics at 41% and 31% respectively. This represents a decrease compared to 2008. In 2010 the percentage of students gaining five or more good GCSE grades increased to 57% and 45% including English and mathematics, which nevertheless remains below the national



average. Data indicate that the rate of progress made by students in 2009 was inadequate and current available data indicate that this has not improved in 2010. While progress in mathematics has increased, the slower rate of improvement in English has detracted from overall school improvement. Some students with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make expected progress. The school focused its efforts on raising attainment in 2010, but this was at the expense of student progress. School improvement measures resulting from the National Challenge initiative are now having an impact on improving achievement for students in Year 11 and the school uses a tracking system which makes better use of available data and which has been well received by both staff and students. Students know their current attainment levels and have challenging targets.

Students interviewed believe that they are being given the opportunity to become independent learners. While the inspection team acknowledges the work being done in the school to develop literacy, visits to classrooms and lesson observations did not support the students' perception, as many lessons observed were too teacher led. Too few examples were seen of students working independently and using skills which encourage problem solving, research and higher-order thinking in order to further their knowledge. Students were often 'doing' things independently rather than 'learning' independently.

The arrangement for monitoring and evaluation procedures and its impact on standards until recently has been inadequate. Many routine aspects of school improvement work, including observing teaching and monitoring the quality of learning, had not been established. More rigorous systems are now in place, although there has been insufficient impact on raising standards to date as these systems are not yet embedded. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features and no inadequate teaching was observed. Subject reviews have recently been introduced but have not yet included English. Any remaining variation in the quality of middle leadership is being addressed and middle leaders are being encouraged to share good practice with each other and are becoming more self-critical.

The drive and determination of the new headteacher and a committed leadership team, coupled with a supportive and knowledgeable governing body as well as continued support from the local authority and the School Improvement Partner, indicate a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement. Plans are in place to conduct an audit on the senior leadership team's skills to design a structure which plays to strengths and secures school improvement. Middle leaders are being better held to account for the performance of their subject areas and year groups. Students' learning and progress have become the key focus for the school.

The school's specialist subject contributes significantly to school improvement and student well-being. Physical education is enjoyed by the students and the quality of teaching is outstanding. A recent positive Ofsted review of the physical education department resulted in the development of the school's 'Toward Outstanding



Together' improvement programme which focuses on improving the quality of teaching and learning and of leadership and management across the school.

The school appreciates the support it receives from the local authority and the School Improvement Partner and programmes are in place to raise standards.

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 December 2008**

- Raise standards and achievement, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Provide more opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work more rigorously.