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2 February 2011

Mrs Elaine Kucharski
Headteacher
Newbridge Learning Community
Moss Lane
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Dear Mrs Kucharski,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Newbridge Learning Community

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 February 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please give my particular thanks to the students for their friendly welcome and to the Chair of the Governing Body, the local authority representative and the School Improvement Partner for speaking with me.

The school's annexe has closed since the last inspection. All groups of students are now based on the Newbridge site, although some spend time each week off-site, particularly for vocational learning activities.

As a result of the inspection on 25 and 26 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 satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

In lessons, students' progress is accelerating. This is the result of greater consistency and continued improvement in the quality of teaching. In particular, learning is more rapid when the lesson content captures students' interest, builds on their experiences and engages them in practical activities. Students are increasingly prepared to participate in discussions, to read aloud to one another and to commit their ideas in writing. This illustrates their improving attitudes to learning. Improvements are most marked in English lessons. However, sometimes improvements in the content of students' written work are masked by persisting weaknesses in their handwriting and in the presentation of their work. On occasion, individual students continue to find it hard to participate because they are worried or unwell. These students are becoming more able to manage their own behaviour as a result of increasingly positive and sensitive relationships with staff. Consequently, the

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number of occasions when learning is interrupted and the use of exclusions have both reduced significantly.

Although attainment remains low, the results for students at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2010 showed improvement compared to 2009. For the first time, a small proportion of students gained 5 A* to C grades at GCSE. In addition, almost all students gained a qualification in English and mathematics, whether at GCSE, Entry Level or in adult literacy and numeracy. The wider range of accreditation gained and the annual increases in students' average points scores at the end of Key Stage 4 are evidence of better achievement. The accreditation offered is also allowing students to demonstrate better skills for the future, for example, through qualifications gained in citizenship or in preparation for working life. The work-related and vocational courses are also giving students greater opportunities to sample a number of career paths, including hospitality, beauty therapy and motor vehicle engineering. The widening curriculum also allows those students for whom it is appropriate to show better attainment in art, music, history or geography, for example.

The overall attendance of students has improved considerably and at a faster rate than that recommended at the last inspection. This is the result of the school's concerted efforts. The attendance of some individuals with a past history of exceptionally poor attendance has increased significantly. For students who find coming to school very difficult, flexible programmes which allow attendance in the evenings are proving increasingly effective in re-engaging them in education.

The school's work in promoting community cohesion is having a stronger impact on students' knowledge of different cultures. There are more links with the local community and growing opportunities to participate in cultural events and to meet people from different backgrounds, including through trips abroad. This has resulted in students' greater understanding and tolerance of differences and in their increased respect for others, both at school, in the immediate community and more widely.

At the last inspection, the school's capacity for sustained improvement was judged to be good. The school continues to build on this and to raise the expectations of staff and students as to what can be achieved. As a result, there is an increasingly shared understanding among senior leaders of the improvements made to date and of the priorities for the future.

The support of the local authority and the School Improvement Partner has challenged the school effectively in helping to raise achievement and to improve attendance.

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

Liz Godman

February 2011



Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 25 and 26 November 2009

- Ensure that attendance improves by two per cent each year to enable more students to benefit from the school's good teaching and support for personal development.
- In line with the school's community cohesion plan, ensure that students develop quickly a good understanding of the ethnic and religious context of their community in a local, national and global context.