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Mr D Hadley-Pryce
Lordswood Boys' School
Hagley Road
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Dear Mr Hadley- Pryce

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Lordswood Boys' School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with my colleague Ruth Westbrook on 12 January 2011, for the time your acting headteacher gave to our initial discussions and for the information which was provided before and during the inspection.

Since the time of the previous inspection there have been significant changes to the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders and to the leadership of departments. At the time of the visit the headteacher was visiting education establishments in Boston, Massachusetts and took part in discussions via the internet, and the deputy headteacher was absent from school.

As a result of the inspection on 4 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment improved significantly in 2010 although it remains below average. Results in both English and mathematics GCSE were far closer to national figures with the majority of students gaining grades A*-C in one or other of the subjects although the proportion who gain these grades in both is low. In 2010 students made better progress than in the previous year, although students from an Indian or Pakistani background did less well than others within the school. While there are still a number of areas where progress is weak there is a positive momentum and this is confirmed by data from the school's records and tracking. The school has a planned

September 2010



development session to improve the reliability of estimated grades because as yet some departments do not make accurate predictions. The school has reliable systems in place to identify any underperforming students and to give additional support when necessary. These are particularly focused on English and mathematics.

In the sixth form the number of students taking GCE examinations is small. In 2010 the progress made by students taking A level examinations was satisfactory and that made by those taking AS examinations was good.

The quality of teaching and learning is improving and the specialist area of sport is starting to have a significant impact, for example in leading developments in the use of assessment. Many improvements are in the early days and as such are inconsistent across the school. Planning includes different levels for learning objectives, however too often all students start at the lowest level and work through at the same pace meaning that often the higher level objectives are not tackled. Rarely do different groups of students start at different levels. Marking is more frequent and often gives students advice on how to improve. Sometimes this is given orally and not always recorded by students or time is not given for students to reflect upon the comments and then update their work taking account of the advice. Planning also includes opportunities for students to consolidate their learning both during lessons and at the end.

The school has been successful in including more opportunities for students to be actively engaged in their learning. Lessons often include a wide variety of differing activities and students commented on how they find lessons more interesting and engaging. The resulting behaviour in these lessons is good and students commented that overall behaviour had improved, including the pride students take in being a member of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) as a factor. Students are perceptive and appreciative of the efforts made by staff to improve lessons; one said 'The teachers have done their part it is now down to us to do ours.'

The school, well supported by the School Improvement Partner and a recently retired headteacher, has established a coherent senior leadership team who are aware of their roles and responsibilities and are now starting to impact upon bringing about the necessary improvements. It is testament to the improved confidence in the senior team that the headteacher was able to leave the school in their charge, a position he would not have been able to do previously. This demonstrates a better capacity to improve. Target setting is now well established and the school has a clear improvement plan. Departments are held to account through departmental reviews, although these are variable in quality and do not always bring about a swift response to plan how to bring about the necessary improvements. Subject leaders are also held to account by frequent meetings with senior leaders, especially when considering progress towards GCSE targets. Staff are supportive of the drive to improve and in a recent survey a high percentage of staff felt they can influence how they work and a significant number commented that recent changes had been for the better.

Greater use is being made of the specialist area of sport within lessons. All lessons plan to incorporate elements of sport and the school is extending its work with partner schools to help them improve their sporting opportunities. Students enjoy sport and the sport young apprentices are proud to wear their distinctive tracksuits around school, as well as supporting other students to take part in sporting activities at lunchtime and breaks.

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

Michael Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve achievement in mathematics and English by:
 - identifying and providing additional support for underachieving students
 - ensuring tracking and monitoring of student progress are frequent and robust
 - providing opportunities for students to review learning in lessons and set realistic targets for improvement.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning so more is good or better by ensuring that:
 - assessment information is used to plan lessons and learning activities are well matched to students' abilities, so the least able are sufficiently supported and the most able are sufficiently challenged
 - marking is constructive, of high quality and gives clear feedback on how to improve
 - plenary sessions are planned so that learning can be evaluated at the end of the lesson
 - lessons provide more time for active learning.
- Develop the skills of new leaders and managers to ensure monitoring and evaluation are rigorous by:
 - fully completing the school improvement plan with measurable outcomes by the end of November 2009
 - using reliable and robust target setting which all staff understand
 - developing a collective vision for driving forward improvements.