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10 February 2011

Mr S G Roe
Headteacher
Fleetwood High School
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Dear Mr Roe,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Fleetwood High School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Julie Price Grimshaw, additional inspector, on 9 February 2011, 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 students, staff, governors and advisers who gave us a good insight into the life of the school.

Since the last inspection the school has changed its name. It was redesignated as a specialist sports and information communication technology college in 2010. Several new heads of department have been appointed to replace previous post holders. The number of students on roll has declined from 931, at the time of the last inspection, to 826.

As a result of the inspection on 16 and 17 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.

Students' attainment continues to be low but is improving at a faster rate than that found nationally. In 2010, 34% of students achieved five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. This was a considerable improvement on attainment in the previous two years, which had been below the National Challenge floor target. In 2010 75% of students gained five good GCSE grades, in line with national average performance. Attainment in science improved rapidly and the proportion of students gaining two good science qualifications in 2010 was significantly above the national average. Standards of attainment in modern foreign languages were also above the national average.

Overall, students enter the school with prior attainment that is below average. The results of 2010 examinations indicated that they made broadly satisfactory progress, although this

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was not as strong in English and mathematics as in other subjects. Students made weaker progress in mathematics than in English at the time of the previous inspection. This was still the case in 2010; however, on the evidence seen in school tracking data and through lesson observations, progress is now strengthening. The school's tracking indicates that it is well placed to meet its performance target for 2011; this target has been raised to represent increased ambition. Since the last inspection, attendance has continued to improve and is now closer to that of similar schools. The proportion of students who are persistently absent has been substantially reduced due to tenacious efforts by the school and partner agencies.

During the monitoring visit, inspectors observed teaching, the vast majority of which was good, and considered the school's monitoring records. The school has taken effective action to raise the quality and develop the consistency of teaching. Good practice has been shared through a variety of approaches, including filming plenary sessions as the basis of staff in-service training and establishing action research groups. Productive relationships have been forged with staff from the local partner school, enabling wider discussion of effective strategies to promote high quality teaching and learning. The school has successfully focused on improving students' motivation. Inspectors found that students were keen to work, valued the school's rewards system and had a clear sense that staff were committed to helping them to succeed. Most lessons observed were characterised by good behaviour, positive relationships and high expectations. Teachers responded well to the different needs of students, for instance, through effective questioning to extend students' understanding. In the lessons that were less effective, tasks were not sufficiently precise for students to be clear about what they were learning. Teachers' strategies for improving students' literacy skills across the curriculum are not as well developed as other aspects of their practice. The quality of marking is variable. There are excellent examples of clear, precise assessment including guidance on improvement. However, some marking is too brief to be helpful to students.

Several new middle leaders have been appointed to the school since its last inspection. They have been well supported through an effective induction process and, along with longer-established leaders, make an effective and energetic contribution to school improvement. There is a rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation, and a strong accountability framework at departmental and whole school level. The governing body, through its standards and effectiveness group, has a much sharper awareness of achievement and progress in different subjects.

The school is a pleasant, supportive environment where parents and carers are made welcome. The level of attendance by parents and carers at school events has risen. Channels of communication have been broadened through the use of the internet. Parents and carers appreciate the new style of reports on their children's progress. In response to their feedback, the school has revised the students' planner to be more user-friendly. However, despite the school's sustained efforts, a significant minority of parents are not engaged in the life of the school.

The school's specialist status as a sports and information communication technology college continues to have a demonstrable impact on students' experiences and outcomes. Attainment is strong in the specialist subjects and specialist subject teachers have made a significant contribution to the school's programme of sharing good practice. Students enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities and, through their work as sports leaders, contribute positively to their local community.

The school has received substantial and effective support from the local authority and the National Challenge Adviser. Training provided by advisers and consultants has been well targeted, sensitively co-ordinated to meet the school's needs and positively received. Partnership working with a local school has also proved to be beneficial in enabling teachers to observe, discuss and improve their practice.

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

Mrs Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 16 and 17 September 2009

- Make more rapid progress in raising attainment across the school, particularly the achievement of National Challenge targets in English and mathematics at GCSE by:
 - increasing the proportion of lessons where students make good progress in their learning
 - making more effective use of assessment information to plan activities that meet the precise learning needs of all students
 - providing more opportunities for staff to share best practice in teaching, learning and assessment

- Review the contribution of middle leaders to school improvement

- Involve more parents and carers in the life and work of the school