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4 February 2011

Ms P Kane  
Headteacher  
Whalley Range 11-18 High School and Business and Enterprise College  
Wilbraham Road  
Whalley Range  
Manchester  
Lancashire  
M16 8GW

Dear Ms Kane,

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Whalley Range 11-18 High School and Business and Enterprise College**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff provided when Julie Price-Grimshaw and Stephen Rowland, additional inspectors, and I inspected your school on 8 February 2011. We are also grateful for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on our thanks to your School Improvement Partner and to all the staff and students who gave their time to meet with us.

Since the last inspection, the school has been able to introduce a new management structure. Substantial construction work has been taking place on site under the Building Schools for the Future programme.

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.

Achievement has improved; attainment in 2010 was broadly in line with schools nationally and students are now making good progress. In 2010 there was no significant underperformance from any of the students of the different ethnic groups represented in the school. The GCSE results in English have also improved significantly to be just above the national average. The percentages of students in the school making the expected progress in English and mathematics are higher than in most schools. However, progress in lessons observed by the inspection team was more variable, with some being inadequate. The overall improvement demonstrates the positive impact of a range of measures including training for teachers, better assessment of progress, more-accurate intervention to support students who are falling behind and developments in the curriculum. The improvements are

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also reflected in better attendance and some excellent practice in the management of students' absence. Most of the behaviour observed by the inspection team was good, but not all teachers were applying the school's behaviour policy consistently and this occasionally prevented all students from making good progress.

Leaders and managers have made significant improvements to the monitoring of teaching and learning. They also have a realistic view of current performance and the quantity of good lessons has increased. Members of the senior team regularly undertake 'learning walks' to complement performance management lesson observations. Professional development opportunities have been well targeted to raise performance, such as the work on Assessment for Learning and the use of alternative learning structures. Inspectors observed examples of good planning, well-targeted questioning aimed at the precise attainment level of students and lessons with a strong pace and appropriate challenge. In other lessons observed, there was an over dominance of teacher-led activities and a lack of different tasks to enable students of differing abilities to achieve the lesson's goals. Teachers are generally sharing the learning intentions of each lesson with students. These are often linked to grades or attainment levels. In some cases, however, inspectors judged them to be under-ambitious for some students, or insufficiently precise.

Much work has been done to improve the use of assessment and heads of faculty arrange for regular reviews of students' work. This has resulted in work that is usually marked promptly with helpful guidance offered about how to improve. In many cases, teachers also provide good feedback about the level of attainment reached in particular pieces of work. Teachers are currently working on a programme to improve their assessment of progress within each lesson and inspectors observed good practice in this respect. In English, for example, peer assessment is well established and the quality of marking is mainly good. Regular, constructive written feedback, linked to attainment targets, provides clear guidance on areas for improvement. In a minority of lessons, assessment strategies are not yet sufficiently well embedded and sometimes strategies are used when not entirely appropriate. This leads to the assessment activity becoming the focus and distracting from the principal learning aims of the lesson.

The new leadership structures in the school are starting to work well. A motivated and able team of senior leaders, inspired by the headteacher's vision for improvement is helping to move the school forward. School development planning is thorough and can be linked to accountability and performance at all levels in the school. Recent monitoring of the impact of the improvement plan shows systematic checking and accurate evaluation. The academic outcomes for students are now placed as the most important criteria by which success is judged, with a clear focus on the learning improvements that will generate better outcomes. Inspectors judged that in some key respects, however, the self-evaluation of the leadership team was slightly overgenerous in relation to the Ofsted evaluation schedule. While progress in some areas is very strong, such as attendance, in others improvements are not yet sufficiently well established to have demonstrated consistent impact. Leaders have yet to ensure that the least-effective teaching is consistently and robustly tackled, so that students very rarely experience anything that is inadequate.

The school's specialisms in business and enterprise and sport make a strong contribution to its overall effectiveness. The school has also benefitted from external support in the form of additional School Improvement Partner time and a variety of programmes offered as part of the Greater Manchester Challenge.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. I am confident that careful and consistent application of the school's current strategies should produce a good outcome at your next inspection. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mr John Peckham  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 4 November 2009**

- Raise standards, especially in English, and improve the rate of students' progress, especially in some ethnic groups, by:
  - accurately monitoring the quality of teaching and learning
  - increasing the proportion of good lessons
  - improving attendance throughout the school
  - ensuring that assessment effectively informs what students learn in lessons so that they build on their existing skills and knowledge effectively
  - raising the quality of marking to provide guidance to students about how to improve their work.
- Increase the impact of the leadership team's improvement planning by:
  - ensuring more accurate and robust self-evaluation
  - implementing sharp measurable improvement strategies
  - carrying out regular systematic checks on the progress of these strategies
  - ensuring that the academic outcomes for students are the most important criteria by which the success of plans are judged.