

18 March 2011

Mr N G Wilson
Headteacher
Newall Green High School
Greenbrow Road
Wythenshawe
Manchester
M23 2SX

Dear Mr Wilson,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Newall Green High School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Stephen Rowland, additional inspector, on 17 March 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 staff, students, member of the governing body and representative from the local authority, who provided a clear insight into the life of the school.

The federation with Benchill Primary School, which was in place at the time of the previous inspection, has been extended to include Baguley Hall Primary School. In September 2010, the federation entered a Trust arrangement with various partners, forming the South Manchester International Learning Enterprise. The school was redesignated as a specialist college in June 2010, with specialisms in science with mathematics, arts and vocational subjects. In addition, it has received the Cultural Diversity Quality Assurance Mark (gold), UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award, Learning Outside the Classroom Award for Excellence and Innovation (national 11-19 winner) and International Schools Award.

As a result of the inspection on 22 and 23 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The proportion of students achieving five good grades at GCSE or equivalent, including English and mathematics, rose to 37% in 2010. This figure is significantly below the national average but represents strong improvement on performance in 2009 when results fell below the floor target. The proportion of students achieving five good grades rose to 77% in 2010 and is just above the national average. The proportion of students gaining two good science qualifications continues to be well-above average. Students' average points scores rose considerably in 2010 and the proportion of students gaining higher grades increased. The

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school's reliable and robust tracking data indicate that it is well placed to meet its challenging targets for 2011. A new tracking system has been developed enabling leaders and teachers to have a very clear view of students' progress. Intervention to address underachievement is swift, well targeted and effective. The proportion of students who are persistently absent continues to be high, despite the best efforts of the school and partner agencies, and this has a detrimental effect on their achievement.

Observations of learning in lessons confirm that the majority of students are making better progress. Much of the teaching observed by inspectors was lively, imaginative and tailored to meet students' needs. The vast majority of students behaved well, contributed to discussions and persevered when working independently. In discussions, they celebrated recent improvements, particularly with regard to the increased pace and challenge in lessons, wider choices at GCSE, including humanities subjects, and the broadening of opportunities through links with universities. There is better quality and greater consistency in the teaching of mathematics than reported at the previous inspection, although there is still some variability in the planning of activities enabling students to work collaboratively. On a few occasions, opportunities for students to contribute extended answers are limited. Teachers' assessment of students' work is accurate, including helpful marking which balances praise, advice and challenge.

There have been significant staffing changes in the mathematics department since the previous inspection, including the appointment of an assistant headteacher as subject leader. An assistant headteacher has also been appointed to the English department. These appointments have built capacity for improvement by focusing on accelerating learning, sharing good practice and taking concerted action to rectify weaknesses. Subject leaders in mathematics and English observe lessons in each other's departments, provide helpful feedback and develop coaching for colleagues. There has been considerable work across the school on improving assessment, varying questioning techniques and improving students' literacy. The impact of these initiatives is evident in lessons. Monitoring and evaluation systems are rigorous, including teachers and leaders at all levels within the school. Improvement planning has been strengthened and there is a shared understanding of the school's targets and how these are to be achieved.

The school's status as a specialist college continues to have a significant impact on improving provision and outcomes. Attainment in science, arts and vocational subjects is high. There are many productive links with universities, drama companies, local businesses and other partners that broaden students' aspirations and provide exciting experiences. Students' self-esteem is enhanced through involvement in school productions, leadership roles and engagement in an impressive range of extra-curricular activities.

The school is a dynamic, greatly respected, hub of the local community and is highly responsive to local need. Federation and Trust arrangements enhance the school's capacity to remove barriers to learning and to find innovative ways of engaging students and their families.

The school has benefited from sensitive support provided through the Greater Manchester Challenge programme. The partnership of local authority advisory staff in affirming the school's work and supporting its ambitious plans for community development has been greatly appreciated.

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 22 and 23 September 2009

- Raise attainment and achievement in GCSE subjects, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - making lessons more challenging
 - ensuring that pupils are full participants in lessons and learn actively
 - ensuring that activities are purposeful and enable pupils to explain, think and to justify their methods.

- Raise attainment and achievement for more able pupils by:
 - ensuring that the curriculum meets their needs
 - increasing the proportion attaining the higher GCSE grades
 - ensuring that activities are purposeful, challenging and enable pupils to explain, think and to justify their methods

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - enabling them to improve pupils' learning through more rigorous evaluation and monitoring of lessons
 - improving the quality and impact of improvement planning so that measures of success are clear and underperforming aspects of the school are improved.