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23 March 2011

Mr D Stevinson  
Headteacher  
Sandy Upper School and Community Sports College  
Engayne Avenue  
Sandy  
SG19 1BL

Dear Mr Stevinson

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Sandy Upper School and Community Sports College**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 22 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the governors, staff and students who gave up their time to meet with me during the inspection.

There have been no changes to the context of the school since it was inspected on 8 March 2010. As a result of this inspection, 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.

The proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, rose by a further five percentage points in 2010 to 51%, which was just below the national average. The school's data indicate that there is likely to be a similar improvement in the results in 2011. Other measures of attainment, such as the average capped total points score and the average points scores in English and mathematics, also rose but by a smaller amount. Although data indicate a gradual improvement over the last 12 months, improvement in the school's results over the last four years has been substantial.

Over the last year, the school has maintained a rigorous programme of lesson observations and has stringent procedures to deal with situations where inadequate teaching is observed. This has resulted in a further reduction in the proportion of inadequate teaching as staff have left or responded to the additional support, which has been provided to help them improve their teaching.

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Improving the quality of teaching and learning is a key element in the school's development plan, and various initiatives have been implemented to improve the quality of teaching. Coaching models have been developed and an enthusiastic group of staff meets regularly to try out and evaluate new techniques, which are then disseminated to other staff. The school's last round of lesson observations indicates that just over half of the teaching is good or better and just under half is satisfactory. In the satisfactory teaching, aspects highlighted in the previous inspection, such as pace, challenge, the use of assessment and opportunities for students to work independently, remain as areas for improvement. There has been a marked improvement in students' behaviour and an increase in the use of paired and group work in lessons. In too many lessons, however, students are far too passive and are not engaged enough in their learning. While most students have a clear understanding of their current and target grades, the marking of their work does not yet provide a sufficient level of challenge or enough guidance to help them understand how they might improve.

The senior leadership team has maintained a strong focus on dealing with the issues for improvement from the last inspection and has continued to strengthen the school's procedures for holding staff to account. Regular line management meetings, annual departmental reviews and expectations of staff outlined in the staff handbook make clear the accountability of all staff for improving the progress of all students in all subjects. The governing body has strengthened its involvement in the annual review process and there is now a good deal of rigour in holding each department to account for the quality of its work.

The school's specialism in physical education and sports continues to have a positive impact on the curriculum through the provision of a wide range of sports activities and sports-related examination courses. The sports leadership programme contributes well to the personal development of those students who take part. The specialism continues to foster positive relationships with feeder schools.

The school has benefited from good support from the local authority, particularly through the 'Gaining Ground' project and the establishment of links with a partner school. These have been used to develop leadership skills through reciprocal visits, with a particular focus on the use of data. Additional funding has enabled the school to provide training for lead teachers, which is contributing to improvements in teaching and learning. Support from the authority's consultants has helped to strengthen provision in the mathematics department, in particular through developing active learning and behaviour management strategies.

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

September 2010



Graham Sims  
Additional inspector



## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2009**

- Raise standards, so that students achieve at and above national averages for five A\* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, by increasing the rigour of senior leaders' lesson observations and feedback to staff, especially of the weaker departments, and holding them to account.
  
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good and better through:
  - using appropriate pace and challenge
  - consistent use of assessment in lessons, including marking, to guide students so that they know what they can do and how to improve
  - increasing the opportunities for students to take responsibility through paired and group work
  - ensuring that the school's behaviour procedures are consistently applied in lessons.