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11 April 2011

Mr D Hood  
Headteacher  
Cressex Community School  
Holmers Lane  
High Wycombe  
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HP12 4QA

Dear Mr Hood

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Cressex Community School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 31 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please would you also pass on my thanks to the local authority, your National Challenge adviser and the Chair of the Governing Body for their time in our discussions.

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes. The school became part of a National Challenge Co-operative Trust, involving a local girls' independent school, a boys' grammar school, the local authority, Buckinghamshire New University and The Co-operative College based in Manchester. As a consequence of these changes, the governing body was reorganised. In September 2010, the school moved into brand new premises. The sixth form was reviewed and what is on offer to students has been established in order to meet an identified gap in local provision.

As a result of the inspection on 17 March 2010, 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.

Good progress has been made in raising achievement, in improving learning and in accelerating the progress students make. The recently introduced assessment systems are proving highly effective in collecting and analysing data. Teachers use



this information well to plan lessons which cater for students' learning needs. The information is used particularly well for students identified as needing extra help and support, specifically in communication and literacy. Interventions such as individualised learning, small group work, improving marking and tracking systems, and computer software programs aimed at raising students' competency in English are all helping students to achieve more and to raise their levels of knowledge and understanding. Consequently, attainment is improving and current Year 11 students are on track to exceed the school's challenging targets. That said, attainment remains low. Cross-curricular provision has been improved and is starting to have an impact on raising students' attainment. Teachers' awareness of the importance of communication and literacy across all subjects has been raised. Higher expectations are being demanded of teachers from leaders and managers supported by good professional development. Heads of departments are increasingly accountable for the attainment and progress of the students in their subjects. This, in turn, is helping to raise the importance of literacy across the school and to support the good progress students make. Good examples were seen of teachers supporting students' understanding of specific key vocabulary, relevant to the subject they were learning. This was seen in a Year 7 science lesson where students were evaluating their own progress. It was also seen in the good support provided for those students who are new to learning English, where intensive one-to-one and small group sessions give them the boost needed to access the rest of the curriculum.

Following the previous inspection, leaders reviewed the sixth form provision. This has resulted in a much-slimmed-down Year 12 in order to re-establish relevant personalised learning. The school has rightly focused on supporting the learning needs of individuals and is establishing programmes of learning which are addressing identified gaps in the local community. The level of interest in joining the sixth form is increasing.

The school has specialist status for business and enterprise. There is a greater take-up of business qualifications by students, for example the vast majority of students in Year 11 are studying for GCSE in business. Good links are established between local business partnerships. From September 2011, the sixth form is offering Level 3 provision in business studies and physical education along with vocational studies.

Local authority consultants have worked closely with the leadership team in providing expertise. This has included good support particularly from the literacy consultant, and behaviour and attendance consultant working closely with departments within the school. National Challenge funding has allowed the school to build capacity in leadership and management in supporting the raising of attainment. Inspection evidence shows that this additional, focused support, along with excellent leadership, has been effective in improving the quality of teaching and the capacity of leaders at all levels in driving school improvement. Consequently, the school has good capacity to continue to improve.



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

Sue Vale  
Additional Inspector



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 17–18 March 2010:**

Raise attainment and improve learning and progress by:

- ensuring all teachers use assessment information carefully to plan lessons that meet the needs of all groups of students
- strengthening cross-curricular provision for improving students' literacy
- improving the capacity of leadership and management of the sixth form to drive and embed planned improvements.