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Mr Ken Mackenzie  
The Acting Headteacher  
Sedgehill School  
Sedgehill Road  
London  
SE6 3QW

Dear Mr Mackenzie

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Sedgehill School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 May 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to staff and students who contributed to the inspection.

Since the last inspection, interim leadership and management arrangements which followed the resignation of the previous headteacher have been revised with your appointment as acting headteacher with responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school. An experienced headteacher from a neighbouring school has been appointed as executive headteacher. Leadership and management arrangements for mathematics have changed and mathematics is now led and managed by the school's head of performing arts. A teacher has recently been promoted to the post of second in charge of mathematics.

As a result of the inspection on 14 and 15 October 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 is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising students' achievement.

The school has taken concerted and effective action to address the inadequacies in provision for mathematics identified at the previous inspection, with the result that attainment in mathematics by the end of Year 11 is rising quickly. Forty-three per cent of current Year 11 students have already secured a grade C or above in GCSE mathematics through early entry, with almost all working to improve their grade in this summer's examination. Whilst improvements have not been sufficient to fully

remedy the legacy of underachievement in mathematics, students' progress has accelerated quickly in a short period of time. Very close monitoring of students' progress, based on robust and minute data, provides strong evidence of rising attainment in mathematics. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities making expected progress in mathematics by the end of Year 11 has more than doubled. Whilst all groups of learners benefit from these improvements, leaders and managers know that the pace of improvement for some White British students and some students of mixed heritage has been slower than for other groups. Nevertheless, as a result of these improvements, the proportion of students on track to secure five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, is significantly higher than at this stage in previous years.

Expertise brokered from the school's specialist subjects has been instrumental in securing improvements in mathematics, particularly through strengthened leadership capacity. With good support from specialist consultants, the head of performing arts has driven improvement well. Monitoring and evaluation have been strengthened and teachers are held closely to account for students' progress. Crucially, progress data are used more effectively and incisively to inform day-to-day teaching and developments to the curriculum. Revised and flexible setting arrangements now enable teachers to refine their teaching more carefully to ensure that lessons fully meet the needs of students with different levels of prior attainment. Rigorous and minute analysis of students' attainment in each area of mathematics enables teachers to identify and address students' individual areas for improvement.

In the mathematics lessons seen, students responded extremely positively to the highly personalised teaching they received. Students reported, consistently, that teaching in mathematics has improved because activities are very tightly matched to their individual needs. Single-sex classes help to raise achievement in Year 11, particularly in developing girls' confidence in tackling mathematical problems. Students have received a comprehensive raft of additional support, including one-to-one mentoring and small group teaching. Improved practice in the use of assessment is increasingly seen in Year 10 mathematics lessons.

Crucial to improvements in the quality of students' learning in mathematics and across the curriculum has been the success of strategies to improve students' behaviour and their readiness to learn. Staff and students report how much behaviour has improved in the period since the school was last inspected. The expectation that students demonstrate 'readiness, respect and responsibility' has quickly been embedded across the school. Expectations have been raised with regard to punctuality at the start of the school day and during lesson changeovers. More importantly, policies have been enforced consistently and robustly. These improvements have accelerated the pace of learning because lessons start more quickly and are only occasionally disrupted by poor behaviour.

Attendance, although still too low for students in Key Stage 4, has risen since the school was inspected. The proportion of students who are persistent absentees has reduced but remains too high.

Strategies to improve teachers' planning and use of assessment have had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum. Teachers are now better informed about students' prior attainment and use this information increasingly effectively to ensure learning is closely matched to students' individual needs. A comprehensive programme of continuing professional development ensures that the best practice in teaching and learning is shared more widely than before. Linked to this, better use of assessment means that teachers and subject leaders gauge students' progress over time more accurately than before. In the majority of lessons seen, teachers made effective use of assessment information to ensure that students received an appropriate level of challenge and support. On occasions, teachers' expectations for some of the less-able students were too low. In some lessons, students are too passive because teaching strategies do not ensure that all students are fully engaged in the learning. Opportunities are missed to add pace and enjoyment to the learning through well-constructed paired and group activities.

The quality of leadership has been strengthened across the curriculum through effective strategies to improve the impact of middle leaders. Some middle leaders have improved their skills through exploiting opportunities to become associate leaders, with individual responsibility for important whole-school initiatives. Training for middle leaders in the use and analysis of performance data is now securing better consistency in the rigour and accuracy of self-evaluation.

The school's specialist status has been key to driving improvements in mathematics through sharing the best practice in leadership and management. Teachers from the specialist subject have shared their expertise with other colleagues through the school's training programme to help improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The school has received good support from local authority staff in the period since the school was inspected. The local authority was instrumental in brokering the partnership with another school which has strengthened capacity at senior and middle leadership level. The statement of action produced by the local authority in response to the last inspection was judged by Ofsted to be fit for purpose and fulfilled requirements. The school has benefited through the establishment of a school improvement partnership board, involving key stakeholders, to assess regularly the school's progress against targets and to help shape short-term priorities. In addition, staff have benefited from the support of local authority and London Challenge consultants to raise achievement in English, mathematics and science.

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

**Daniel Burton**

Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2010**

- Urgently address inadequate achievement in mathematics, by:
  - strengthening leadership and management in mathematics
  - building on the good practice which is becoming established within the mathematics department.
- Improve leadership by:
  - ensuring all middle leaders are fully supported in performing to the same high standard
  - identifying what leads to success in the school's specialist subject areas, and sharing this good practice with subject areas where performance is weaker.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning so that by July 2011 the majority of lessons are good or better, by:
  - providing further training for staff on planning and the use of assessment information
  - making effective use of data to track students' progress and attainment
  - using assessment data consistently well to ensure that all lessons include challenging activities that motivate students to aim high.