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22 June 2011

Mr Andrew Shakos
Acting Headteacher
Parrs Wood High School
Wilmslow Road
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Dear Mr Shakos,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Parrs Wood High School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when two additional inspectors and I inspected your school on 21 June 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

Since the last inspection, the direct involvement of the executive headteacher has ceased and, since September 2010, an acting headteacher has been in post. A new head of mathematics started in September 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 9 February 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.

Students' attainment remains broadly average. In 2010, while overall GCSE results rose in line with national figures, attainment in mathematics rose faster than national figures and the proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, rose substantially from 47% to 57%.

There is evidence of improving progress across all groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities: underachievement in mathematics is no longer evident and growing numbers of students in the main school are making the expected three levels of progress. The school's monitoring records, supported by results from early GCSE entries, indicate that results are set to improve further in 2011 and that the school is meeting, or close to meeting, challenging targets in a number of areas.

School leaders have undertaken a wide-ranging programme of lesson observations since the last inspection. As a result, they have a secure view of teaching in the school and inspection evidence indicates that the school's judgements on the quality of lessons are accurate. The

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school's records show that the frequency of inadequate teaching has declined during the current academic year and is now very rare. Planned work is at an appropriate level but not all teaching takes full account of the range of abilities within the class. The quality of marking remains variable. The school's policy is having an impact on promoting consistency but the frequency and detail of marking varies. Inspectors saw some excellent examples of teachers identifying students' strengths and targets but some targets are insufficiently focused on learning.

Attendance remains in line with national averages. The school did not meet the challenging target for attendance specified in the last inspection: the overall attendance figure for 2009/10 was 91.6%, compared with a target of 93%. However, attendance is rising steadily and the proportion of students who are persistent absentees is reducing. Improving attendance further rightly remains a priority for the school.

Middle leaders now make a stronger contribution to the school's successes. Subject and faculty leaders feel more accountable because they are clear about what is expected. Regular and frequent meetings with senior leaders, together with termly reports to the governing body, contribute to an improved understanding across the school of how to monitor students' progress and how to target interventions effectively. Middle leaders have also contributed to students' improved behaviour through promoting a more consistent application of the school's behaviour policy. As a result, fewer students are being subject to formal exclusion and fewer exhibit challenging behaviour.

Self-evaluation remains realistic. The improved use of assessment data meant that the school's estimates of performance in 2010 were considerably more accurate than in 2009. Improvement planning is well focused on outcomes and includes a range of demanding targets, including for individual groups of students. Leaders and managers have successfully raised attainment, particularly in mathematics, improved attendance and punctuality, and established a more positive attitude among staff and students. In particular, the newly formed inclusion unit has had a positive impact on the attitudes of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities: students from this group now form a smaller proportion than previously of those excluded from school and their attendance has improved. Inspectors found no evidence of any weakness in the school's safeguarding procedures.

The school's specialist area of technology now plays an enhanced role in cross-curricular 'immersion days' and makes a satisfactory contribution to raising standards. While GCSE results in textiles are strong, results in other aspects of design and technology are uneven.

A strong contribution from the local authority, including from the School Improvement Partner, has supported the development of capacity within the school. For example, the coaching programme in assessment for learning is improving practice in the classroom and developing the skills of staff to share good practice with others.

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,

Paul Chambers
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 9 February 2010

- Raise attainment and standards by improving the quality of teaching to good by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - ensuring that work in each class is consistently matched to the different needs of students
 - building on existing good practice to ensure that marking is consistently good and helps students to know what they must do next to improve their work.

- Improve attendance by working closely with persistent absentees and their families. The school should aim to raise overall attendance to 93% by the end of the academic year.

- Strengthen leadership by developing the leadership and management skills of middle leaders.