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24 June 2011

Mr D Stanley
Executive Headteacher
Grange Comprehensive School
Latham Avenue
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 5DX

Dear Mr Stanley,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Grange Comprehensive School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I and Chris Griffin, additional inspector, inspected your school on 23 June 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please forward our thanks to your students for their help during the inspection.

Since the last inspection the school has become a 3 to 16 through school. At present nursery, primary and secondary provision is operating on three different sites and building has just commenced on a permanent site for all provision to be opened in April 2013. An executive headteacher has been appointed with three separate heads of school for nursery and infant, junior and secondary provision. Senior leadership has been restructured to reflect these changes.

As a result of the inspection on 13 October 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The GCSE pass rate for five A* to C including English and mathematics improved to 43% in 2009/10. Improved tracking and monitoring systems point towards there being an accelerated improvement in this indicator in 2010/11. In English and mathematics, the percentage of students making three levels of progress has increased. Since the last inspection there has been a more systematic targeting of key subjects. Senior and middle leaders recognise that the key challenge for the school is to accelerate and sustain improvement in attainment at Key Stage 4 and especially in English and mathematics. The attainment and progress of girls and, in particular, those of high ability require further improvement. Because of effective intervention strategies attendance continues to improve and is currently just over 95%. Students engage very well with each other, staff and other adults; they are keen to learn and make the best use of the opportunities the school is



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offering them. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

During the monitoring visit inspectors undertook a series of learning walks and visited 16 lessons. Teaching and learning were purposeful. Since the last inspection the school has placed a greater focus on the quality assurance of lesson observations. A strategic, whole-school approach to embed more-active learning has been developed. Learning walks provided evidence of more-interactive lessons with greater student involvement. Middle managers now play a central role in the observation of teaching and learning. Assessment practice better informs planning and the next steps in learning. Students confirmed that lessons had become more interactive, challenging and enjoyable. Inspectors agreed with the school assessment that teaching remains satisfactory but improving. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) has improved with each subject now having an e-learning champion. The learning walks confirmed a greater use of ICT and greater student interaction through ICT within the classroom. A greater variety of vocational options are being developed at Key Stage 4 to match the needs of students better. There has been a carefully managed introduction of BTEC courses and a greater promotion of EBAC routes from Year 9. Nurture groups have been established for the more-vulnerable students in Year 7. Changes to the curriculum, including a stronger focus on double and separate science options and the early commencement of Key Stage 4 options, have strengthened provision. Guidance procedures have been further strengthened with additional student and parent meetings in Year 9 to 11 to improve personalised guidance and greater engagement with parents.

High expectations and aspirations are being embedded across senior and middle leaders as well as teaching staff. New initiatives and intervention strategies are evaluated against clearly defined measures to assess their impact and are effectively embedded into school systems. Challenging targets are now set and monitoring and intervention strategies have been tightened, as have the use and sharing of data analysis to promote improvement. Middle managers have welcomed greater accountability and their subsequent increased role in quality assurance and as drivers of improving performance. Inspectors were of the view that greater rigour is required in the grading of internal lesson observations which appeared to be overgenerous when compared to the school's assessment that teaching is satisfactory or set against most-recent attainment and achievement data. The school acknowledges that the National Challenge category provided a major incentive for improvement. Senior leaders and the School Improvement Partner work closely together to make sure the school is moving in the right direction. The school has become more active in promoting community cohesion and in establishing links within the local community. However, it recognises that more work needs to be done to engage the wider community beyond Runcorn so as to reflect the diversity of English society better and promote greater aspirations and ambitions for its students. This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them at that point to be secure and meeting requirements.

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

Mr Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 13 October 2009

- Improve learning in the classroom by:
 - developing students as more independent learners
 - embedding the philosophy of learning to learn into everyday lessons
 - ensuring that assessment informs planning and next steps in learning
 - ensuring that ICT is used more interactively to engage with students.
- Ensure that management at all levels takes an active responsibility in accelerating improvements in learning in order to raise standards further.
- Ensure that the curriculum and schemes of learning are relevant and meet the needs of all students.
- Embed community cohesion more fully into the life of the school to develop students' awareness of the world beyond Runcorn.

