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29 June 2011

Mrs B Mabey
Headteacher
Washwood Heath Technology College
Burney Lane
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Dear Mrs Mabey

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Washwood Heath Technology College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 June 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

There have been no major changes in staffing since the last inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 14 and 15 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 outstanding progress in making improvements and outstanding progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the inspection in October 2009, the attainment of students has improved sharply. GCSE results across the board have been transformed. The most dramatic improvement has been in science, where the proportion of students achieving two or more A* to C grades or equivalent has increased from 7% in 2009 to 77% in 2010. Significant improvements have taken place also in both English and mathematics. The school's assessment data, much of which relates to results at GCSE already obtained by the current Year 11 cohort, shows that the upward momentum is being maintained. Students are now making much better progress. Their good behaviour actively supports their learning. In an outstanding Year 10 mathematics lesson observed, students had frequent opportunities to explain their methods to the whole class. They took part in a variety of engaging activities that required them to work with other students and to assess their own work critically. As a result, their facility



and confidence with a standard algebraic technique increased considerably over the lesson.

Senior leaders have shown both determination and imagination in securing an impressive improvement to the quality of teaching. This is monitored with rigour, and the initiative in securing improvement is shared with an increasingly wide group of teaching staff. In this way, middle managers have been fully empowered to secure improvement in their departments, and newly qualified teachers have had opportunities to share areas of expertise in school training. A wide group of staff has now developed the skills of observing teaching and reviewing the progress of departments. In particular, the drive to improve literacy across the curriculum has been very effective, and all lessons observed showed the impact of this. A most impressive example was an outstanding upper school drama lesson in which students took part enthusiastically in activities that boosted their confidence and increased their skills in verbal expression.

Senior school leaders have been highly effective in communicating a common understanding of the improvement journey on which the school is embarked. This is shared widely by the middle leaders, the whole teaching staff and also by the effective team of mentors. Substantial improvement has already occurred since 2009, and the school's own self-evaluation is of high quality. As a result, the progress made in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

The school's specialist status has been used to secure the strong improvement in results in both technology and science and has had an impact across the school. The STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) club has been particularly successful.

The school has received useful support from the local authority and from a range of local partner schools. In turn, it has provided reciprocal support for neighbouring schools.

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

Robert Barbour
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Increase the proportion of teaching which is good or better by ensuring that:
 - all teachers plan lessons to take account of the full range of students' individual needs and ability levels
 - lessons have pace and challenge
 - marking of work clearly includes specific guidance and targets to help students.

- Keep a relentless focus on improving the outcomes in English and mathematics by:
 - directing intervention strategies to students in English and mathematics
 - improving the standards of literacy across the curriculum by increasing the planning of literacy in lessons
 - devolving responsibilities to middle leaders for raising attainment
 - raising attainment through the specialist subjects, in particular technology and science.