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2 July 2011

Mrs H D'Arcy
Headteacher
Ladybridge High School Sports College
New York
Junction Road
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Dear Mrs D'Arcy,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Ladybridge High School Sports College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your students, members of the governing body, School Improvement Partner and local authority.

Since the last inspection there have been some changes to staffing. A new director and assistant director of standards in mathematics have been appointed. Likewise, there are new directors of information and communication technology (ICT), resistant materials, music and a new director of standards for art will take up post in September due to the retirement of the current potholder. Cover supervisors have been professionally developed and have now moved on to the GTP programme to ensure that standards are maintained even when staff are absent. The modern foreign languages department has expanded in readiness for the new baccalaureate. The school's very significant deficit budget has been paid off early and they have defederated from their partner school. The school has gained the Leading Parent Partnership award.

As a result of the inspection on 9 December 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 good progress in making improvements and outstanding progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection, attainment at Key Stage 4 has risen. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grade GCSE passes including English and mathematics has improved by 14 percentage points from 2009 to 2010. For five or more A* to C grade GCSE passes there has been an eight percentage point increase over the same period, which is significantly above the national average. Current tracking shows that results for this year are

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likely to be well ahead of those for last year. The school's robust monitoring systems show that Year 11 students are on track for further improvements in 2011, particularly in English and mathematics. Results of early entries for mathematics and English are very positive. Current tracking shows that results for this year are likely to be well ahead of last year. Students have a better understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals make the same good progress as the majority of their peers.

Behaviour observed both in activities and around the school is good. Students report that this, along with teaching, has improved greatly since the last inspection. Attendance has further improved and the numbers of persistent absences has reduced. The attendance, attainment, attitudes and progress of White British boys have improved.

There have been improvements in teaching. Teachers' planning creates suitable challenge for students of all levels of ability, particularly the most able. Work in books shows a significant improvement in writing and language skills. There is a clear strategy to improve literacy that permeates all subjects and the impact of this can be seen in students' work and the school's results.

On the day of the inspection, the school was holding a *Super Citizen* day, which involved a variety of innovative multi-cultural learning activities. Some students were visiting mosques and churches, with Key Stage 4 students experiencing life at a local college for the day. The majority of students were in school being taught by teachers or guest teachers with a particular specialism. Students reported that they very much enjoy these expertly planned days as they offer the opportunity for them to work with different students within the school and learn new skills in a fun way. Year 8 students were put through their paces with a *Bollywood Dance* workshop, some Year 9 students learnt softball, which proved highly engaging and challenging, while others collaboratively created their own plot for a Broadway musical.

The curriculum has been strengthened with an increasingly personalised focus and more opportunities for potentially high achievers. Some students are following a GCSE astronomy course after school because they are so inspired by the photographs and information on the virtual learning environment (VLE) designed by a teacher. A senior leader at the school has developed a very successful ICT resource to promote home learning, available to all students through the VLE. This has been so successful that it is used by other schools as it combines answering difficult academic questions with playing games. The specialism contributes significantly to the improvement of teaching and learning; one student commented 'sport is central to well-being, that's why we all get along.'

The very tenacious headteacher has created a very strong team and an extremely positive and creative learning environment. There is strong leadership at all levels. Leaders and the governing body know the school well and are all clear of their roles in the very detailed development plans. There is high staff morale and a strong sense of good will, and

consequently the school has not only improved on areas identified at the last inspection, but has also secured improvements in other areas while facing new challenges. Clear and robust systems of accountability are now in place throughout the school. Challenging targets are set at both key stages; monitoring and intervention strategies have been tightened and are more focussed. Data and information are effectively shared, analysed and used by staff to promote improvement. The School Improvement Partner is working successfully with the school to assist them in their continued focus to improve outcomes.

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

Mrs Sally Kenyon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 9 December 2009

- Raise standards in English and mathematics for all groups of students.
- Increase the rate of students' progress in lessons by ensuring that:
 - tasks set offer suitable challenge for all levels of ability
 - teachers use an effective approach in all subjects to improve students' writing and language skills.
- Raise the motivation and enjoyment of some groups of students, particularly White British boys in Key Stage 4 by:
 - encouraging more teachers to share innovative approaches to learning, such as the use of information and communication technology.