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14 July 2011

Mr D Priestley  
Headteacher  
Greenfield School Community and Arts College  
Greenfield Way  
Newton Aycliffe  
County Durham  
DL5 7LF

Dear Mr Priestley,

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Greenfield School Community and Arts College**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 July 2011, for the time the deputy headteacher, gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and students who took the time to talk to me.

Since the previous inspection the leadership team has been restructured and four assistant headteachers have been appointed from the existing staffing. Recent appointments to mathematics and English have strengthened the leadership of those departments.

As a result of the inspection on 29 September 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.

There have been some marked gains in attainment overall so that the school's own data demonstrate that most students are predicted to gain five A\* to C GCSE grades in this summer's examinations. There are also modest improvements in the number of students gaining five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics but these remain below the national average. The improvement in mathematics has been erratic. There was a marked improvement in 2009 but this was not sustained. Senior and middle leaders are acutely aware of the need to accelerate progress more sharply in English and mathematics to match other subjects. Current progress through the school is more promising and there are positive signs, especially in Year 7, that achievement is accelerating across all subjects and for all groups of students. Improvements in science have been rapid and almost all of Year 11 are predicted to gain two A\* to C GCSE grades this year.

Teaching is improving and consequently learning is increasingly good and sometimes outstanding. This is because teachers use a variety of interesting activities which capture

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students' imagination. Teachers are using assessment information more consistently to plan to meet students' needs. Within this improving picture there remains a core of satisfactory teaching and there are still too many lessons in which all students complete the same task regardless of their ability; this means that some students are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers plan their initial questions well but sometimes do not follow this up with probing supplementary questions. Consequently, students do not always make accelerated progress. Students continue to have good relationships with their teachers and this contributes to students' good behaviour and attitudes to learning. The new 'swan' marking scheme is promising and helping students to understand precisely how to improve their work. This is in the early stages and not all teachers have adopted this good practice.

The school makes increasingly strong and effective use of its specialist status to spread good practice. For example, drama has been used well to promote better speaking and listening skills in a variety of subjects, including modern foreign languages. The arts have also been used to work with identified groups of students to improve their achievement. For example, a group of gifted and talented students have used radio broadcasting to improve their confidence and speaking and listening skills.

The school is building better capacity to improve by ensuring the quality of the monitoring and planning done by middle leaders is more consistent. Leadership in both English and mathematics have recently been strengthened but it is too early to evaluate the impact this has had on students' progress. The monitoring done by middle and senior leaders is regular and robust. Middle leaders have a clear understanding of their role in checking the quality of the school's work. Senior leaders have had significant success in eradicating inadequate teaching. Systems to move satisfactory teaching to good are developing well and teachers are keen to improve their practice. Teachers feel well supported in improving their work and morale is high. The information gathered through robust tracking and departmental reviews is analysed thoroughly and used to inform effective improvement planning and professional development.

The support offered by the local authority and external agencies has been effective and appreciated by the school.

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

Joan Hewitt  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 29 September 2009**

- Increase the rate of pupils' progress so that standards are raised, particularly in the core subjects.
- Ensure a consistently high quality of teaching and use of assessment by:
  - raising the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school
  - sharing existing good practice regularly and routinely
  - improving teachers' use of assessment to inform the planning of pupils' work.
- Accelerate improvement by:
  - increasing the rigour of monitoring and evaluation in order to strengthen accountability at all levels
  - using the outcomes of evaluation to sharpen priorities for further improvement.