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14 July 2011

Ms S Heath
Headteacher
Stanley High Sports College
Fleetwood Road
Southport
Merseyside
PR9 9TF

Dear Ms Heath,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Stanley High Sports College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 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 the Chair of the Governing Body, the School Improvement Partner, staff and students.

Since the last inspection, the previous headteacher left at short notice and the deputy headteacher was appointed as acting headteacher. A new headteacher will take up the position in September 2011. The governing body has also been restructured and there has been some reassignment of roles and responsibilities at senior leadership level.

As a result of the inspection on 12 – 13 January 2010, the school was asked to tackle 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 inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly in line with the national average. There has been a rising trend of attainment in some outcomes over the previous three years. For example, in 2010 the proportion of students gaining five GCSE A* to C grades was significantly above the national average at 82%. However, attainment in mathematics has lagged behind that in other subjects, and in 2010 it dipped to significantly below the national average. Boys do not make as good progress as girls as they move up through the school. Learning and progress in lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory overall, but weaker in mathematics. The school now sets itself challenging targets. However, data provided by the school during the inspection suggest that these will not be met in 2011, largely owing to comparatively weaker performance in mathematics.

The school has put in place systems to improve outcomes in mathematics, such as extra support for students who are underachieving. The school has also provided teachers with

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opportunities to observe best practice in the teaching of mathematics. However, these initiatives are at an early stage of development and therefore their impact is not evident. In addition, poor leadership of mathematics has led to insufficient drive to secure improvements.

The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was variable, but overall remains as it was at the time of the last inspection. In the best lessons, students are purposefully engaged in a wide variety of activities and show enthusiasm for their studies. Students spoke highly of the support they receive and have noticed that, in some lessons, teachers explain carefully what they need to do in order to improve their work and therefore meet or exceed their targets. In some instances, teachers design lessons highly effectively to meet the needs and interests of all students. They also use questioning skilfully to check that students have understood the work and adapt their lessons accordingly. However, in the large majority of lessons observed during the inspection, this was not the case. The school has put in place opportunities to share good practice and has introduced a common lesson plan format to encourage teachers to meet the needs of different individuals or groups in the class. However, the impact of these initiatives to improve the quality of teaching is not always in evidence and there remain wide variations in provision.

Senior leaders have introduced many initiatives in order to monitor the work of the school more effectively. A more rigorous programme of lesson observations, clearer lines of responsibility and highly-focused plans for improved outcomes for students have led to increased accountability at all levels. However, these initiatives are embryonic and procedures are not sufficiently embedded to have secured the required improvement. Instability at senior leadership level has led to a lack of robustness in tackling areas of underperformance and ensuring more consistently good practice. The acting headteacher has worked effectively in establishing clear priorities for improvement, based on self-evaluation that is broadly accurate. The new Chair of the Governing Body now has an accurate grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is increasingly holding the school to account. However, there has been a lack of urgency in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and therefore progress in doing so has been too slow.

The specialism makes an outstanding contribution to the wider life of the school. Students have a very wide range of extra-curricular activities to enjoy, they achieve well in the subject and strong leadership of this area of the curriculum provides an excellent role model for other staff. The local authority has provided substantial support for the school regarding mathematics and by providing training to improve the overall quality of teaching.

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 Joan Davis
Her Majesty's Inspector

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The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 12 – 13 January 2010

- Improve the level of progress students make in mathematics by ensuring that recent improvements are sustained and developed further.
- Further increase the proportion of teaching and learning that is good or better by ensuring all lessons include learning activities that are tailored to the needs of different individuals or groups in the class, and by more frequent checks on learning in lessons.
- Increase the rigour and frequency in monitoring the impact of actions taken to bring about improvements in the school.