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Mr C. Jansen
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Jansen

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Moseley School A Language College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 September 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my particular thanks to Roger McBrien, deputy headteacher, your Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the local authority representatives who all gave up their time to talk to me at such short notice. As part of this visit, the procedures for safeguarding children were checked and found to meet requirements.

Since the inspection in January 2011, the senior management team has been extended including the appointment of a substantive headteacher. Fifteen staff have left the school and eighteen new staff have been appointed, including seven newly qualified teachers. The new Year 7 student intake to the school has reduced to 219 this September, below the school admission limit of 250. An increasing number of students arrive at the school with little or no English, mainly from Romania, Somalia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Since the start of the academic year, there have been twenty new arrivals. There are now twice as many boys as girls on the school roll.

As a result of the inspection on 26 January 2011, 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 is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

Students start the school with attainment well below the national average. The percentage of students attaining five higher GCSE grades improved in the 2011 examinations, and is now similar to the national average. The percentage attaining the similar benchmark including English and mathematics has remained the same as the 2010 results, below the national average. Improving attainment in English remains a challenge for the school due to the increasing number of students who arrive at the school from other countries with no English.

There has been focused support from partner schools and the local authority to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning. The school judges that an increased proportion of teaching is now satisfactory or better and 54% is judged good or better. This represents a 34% improvement in good or better teaching since the last inspection. This has been the result of a stronger focus on ensuring all staff comply with school policies. However, the quality of teaching is still too variable. In the better lessons observed jointly on this visit either with the deputy headteacher or headteacher, there is evidence that teachers are checking during the lessons to see if students understand the work. The pace of learning is brisk. Teachers are asking students questions to gauge the level of their understanding of the work. Lesson plans identify the range of ability in each class and individuals are targeted with specific work that challenges them appropriately. In the less successful lessons, the learning objective is not clear and the intended outcome not measurable enough, resulting in students making slower progress. The most effective marking identifies how the students can improve their work, and students engage in a written and verbal dialogue with the teacher to clarify any misunderstandings. However, much of the marking provides insufficient guidance to students on how they can improve subsequent work. The presentation of work in books is often untidy and too many worksheets are used in some lessons. The marking policy is still not strictly adhered to by all staff and too many students are passive and do not get sufficiently involved in lessons.

The school now tracks students' progress with more confidence and accuracy. This tracking demonstrates that still too few are making satisfactory or better progress. For example, 35% still make inadequate progress in English and 39% in mathematics. The new headteacher and senior staff have identified the issue of slower progress in some subjects and have focused more attention on intervention programmes to support individuals and groups of students.

The diverse range of languages offered by the school as part of the language specialism, for example Arabic, Urdu and Italian, are helping the school to increase the percentage of students who attain five good grades at GCSE.

Attainment in the sixth form in the 2011 examinations was lower than 2010, with the exception of the percentage of students attaining higher grades at AS level. Attainment at AS level remains well below the national average. Students attain higher standards in A2 than in AS examinations. The percentage achieving A to E grades is broadly in line with the national average, although the percentage attaining the higher A and B grades is considerably lower. This continues to affect students' choice of higher education courses. In 2010, 20 students decided to go to university, and in 2011 the figure remained similar at 21, 50% of the Year 13 cohort. The school has now raised the entry requirements to the sixth form for certain subjects to ensure students achieve higher grades. The sixth form leadership has been strengthened and action plans written. There has been an appropriate focus on developing students as independent learners, although students are still not all provided with enough opportunities for challenging independent learning activities in lessons. Action plans still do not focus sufficiently on measurable success criteria to stated actions that will have an impact on students' outcomes and raise attainment.

Improving attendance and punctuality has become a stronger focus since the last inspection. There are signs that the additional external support and funding for poor attendees is beginning to have an impact. Following a dip in attendance in 2010, and a complete year figure of 91.2% in 2010–11, below the national average, there are signs that since the last inspection, attendance is improving. Since the start of term, attendance has been around 95%, which is a 10% increase on a similar period last year. Over recent years, attendance has reduced at key points of the year, largely due to poor weather conditions or students taking additional days off school around the time of religious festivals. The importance of maintaining good attendance has still not become fully embedded in the culture of the school community. Punctuality remains an issue for the school as too many students arrive late. The school has been monitoring punctuality and the number of students arriving late for school is falling as a result. At its peak in 2010, there was an average of 70 late arrivals each day, compared with an average now of 48 students.

The new headteacher is beginning to purposefully set the improvement agenda with the senior team. An action plan has been written in collaboration with the local authority. However, too much of the plan consists of jobs to be done, without enough focus on the intended impact of specific actions on student outcomes.

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose. The school is receiving a range of support from the local authority and partner schools. This includes support for developing the quality of teaching and learning; attendance issues; developing the sixth form provision and outcomes and support for the expanded leadership team. The quality of external support has been of variable quality, but the support for developing teaching and learning has been good. Specific support from local schools for developing the senior leadership team has also been valued. Weaker

support in the past has been as a result of a lack of focus on the intended impact of the support on improving student 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

Clive Kempton HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2011 were:

- Strengthen the management of teaching and learning so that pupils' progress improves quickly and securely and recent improvement is sustained by:
 - taking action that is more effective in developing teachers' skills in the use of strategies to check on pupils' understanding and progress throughout the lesson
 - taking action that is more effective in developing teachers' skills in the use of assessment information to match learning activities more precisely to individual need
 - making more effective use of the outstanding and good practice that is present in the school
 - ensuring that all teachers comply with the school's expectations around planning, marking, the use of assessment and support for literacy.

- Improve the effectiveness of the sixth form by:
 - producing a coherent plan for the systematic improvement of provision and outcomes that is underpinned by measurable success criteria
 - increasing the emphasis on developing students' skills for independent study and their literacy skills so that this becomes a consistent feature throughout sixth form teaching
 - ensuring that all students have appropriate entry requirements to succeed on AS and A level courses and, where these are borderline, ensuring robust learning support is in place
 - strengthening partnership working in order to improve teaching as well as provision
 - encouraging all students to use non-lesson time productively.

- Improve attendance and punctuality by:
 - establishing measurable success criteria against which the impact of the sharply focused actions to improve attendance can be gauged at regular intervals
 - ensuring that all staff make full use of the school's lesson score system to enhance other actions being taken to improve attendance and punctuality
 - raising expectations of punctuality at the start of the school day and tackling lateness to school more robustly
 - working with students and parents to stress the link between attendance and academic success.

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