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Mr R Wyatt
The Acting Headteacher
Grange Park School
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Dear Mr Wyatt

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Grange Park School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 21 November 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to students for their cooperation during the observations of teaching and learning around the school.

In much of the period since the inspection, leadership of the school has been the responsibility of the substantive deputy headteacher due to the long term illness of the headteacher, who has now left the school. Another senior member of staff has also left during this time. The school moved into new, purpose-built facilities soon after the inspection. It now occupies a site close to a mainstream secondary school.

As a result of the inspection on 5 and 6 May 2010, 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

good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



While students' progress remains satisfactory overall, the rate at which students make progress in their learning is improving. This is particularly evident in English where a greater proportion of students make good or better progress. This is mainly because middle leaders and the quality of teaching in this area have been stable since the inspection. Consequently, new systems have been adopted and used more consistently. Students' progress has not improved so markedly in mathematics because of several staff changes. Students' attainment remains low largely due to the nature of their special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The amount of time given to lessons has been suitably increased so that students now have sufficient time to consolidate their learning and acquire new skills. The greatly enhanced range of accreditation that is now available is helping to ensure that the curriculum is more appropriate to students' needs. For example, where previously students left the school with no qualifications in mathematics or science, they now have the chance to achieve functional skills, entry level or GCSE certificates. Partnerships with local mainstream schools provide a range of more appropriate opportunities for more able students to work towards qualifications that accurately reflect their abilities. However, while school leaders have reviewed the courses available at local colleges, they have yet to secure appropriate provision to ensure that students in Key Stage 4 have access to vocational learning.

The introduction of secure systems that identify and record learning outcomes is providing students with better information about what they have learned and what they are aiming to achieve. Teachers' use of resources, such as tables which show the level of attainment reached for different features of students' work, to set challenging but realistic targets is becoming an increasingly consistent feature of lessons. Consequently, students are becoming more able to recognise the progress they are making and understand the next steps they need to take in their learning.

Systematic tracking arrangements have been put in place so that school leaders now have the ability to monitor rigorously how well students make progress over time. They make appropriate use of the information gathered to compare students' performance with national benchmarks and other established criteria. Systems for the moderation of teachers' assessments of students' work are becoming increasingly robust. Teaching staff work together internally to establish greater consistency. Evolving links with other schools are helping to ensure that judgements made within the school are comparable to those made elsewhere.

The relocation of the school has enabled purposeful links to be established that give students a much greater range of opportunities to have ongoing interactions with the wider community. In addition to the curriculum enhancement provided by local mainstream schools, Grange Park students benefit from better opportunities to experience working and playing with others from more diverse backgrounds. While links and a meeting with students from a special school in another country have contributed to the development of students' improved understanding of the wider



world, this element of community cohesion has not moved forward as rapidly as those enhanced by more local connections.

School leaders have worked effectively with advisers from the local authority to establish and review a rigorous cycle of self-evaluation. Monitoring activities, including lesson observations and work scrutinies, have become more thorough. This has improved the quality of information available to senior leaders and helped them to identify more accurately the most important priorities for the school. Staff at all levels are better engaged with the drive for improvement and understand the need for accountability because their involvement in self-evaluation processes is more focused. The governing body has become more rigorous in its scrutiny of information and its challenge of school leaders. Consequently, despite a period of extensive and prolonged change to staffing at senior level, good progress has been made in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

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

Jon Carter
Additional Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010

- Improve the rate at which students learn and make progress by:
 - increasing the amount of planned, taught time
 - extending the range of accredited courses and subjects
 - setting students realistic, challenging targets that are shared with them
 - constructing a curriculum for Years 10 and 11 that is better balanced and more appropriate to students' needs.
- Make leadership and management more effective by:
 - establishing a rigorous cycle of self-evaluation that enables the school to identify the most important priorities on which it needs to focus
 - embedding procedures to accurately assess, moderate, record and track students' achievements
 - analysing assessment data critically against established criteria in order to better determine individuals' and groups' progress and achievements
 - promoting community cohesion in the school's new locality and within the wider world.