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Ms Patsy Weighill
Headteacher
Bilton School
Lawford Lane
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Dear Ms Weighill

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools with additional focus on behaviour:
monitoring inspection of Bilton School - A Maths and Computing College**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 November 2011 with my colleague Elizabeth Cooper, additional inspector, and for the information which you provided during this unannounced inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the many students and the members of the governing body that we spoke to during our visit.

Since the previous inspection, a number of the teaching staff has left the school and there has been a significant restructure of senior and middle leadership responsibilities. From 1 December, the school will convert to academy status and has very recently been approved by the Young People's Learning Agency to offer franchised post-16 provision from September 2012.

As a result of the inspection on 27 April 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 improvement, good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement and the effectiveness of the school in improving students' behaviour is good.

Attainment is broadly average and has risen since the last inspection, with a particularly sharp rise in the proportion of students achieving five GCSE qualifications, including English and mathematics, at grades A* to C. The school's own detailed analyses of results indicate that students made good progress in English, satisfactory progress in mathematics, and particularly strong progress in physical and religious education. Some in-school variation remains but is reducing as



a result of an increase in the quality of teaching and more effective leadership of curriculum areas.

The quality of learning observed during the inspection matched the school's own well-moderated evaluations. Much good teaching and learning were observed, with some that was satisfactory. Students demonstrated positive attitudes and good engagement in learning activities. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson, students quickly settled to effective discussion on the challenging topic of Shakespeare's use of figurative language. Students appreciate the improved quality of teaching and explained that most lessons now include a range of activities, many of which require them to work together. Across curriculum areas, teachers use resources well to make learning interesting. Good use of visual sources in history helped students to understand the impact of the Home Front during the Second World War. Judicious use of resources in a science lesson supported students in their ability to make links with the periodic table, and a range of different graphical models enabled students' learning to be developed in mathematics. Many teachers used graduated learning objectives well to shape lessons and enable students of different levels of ability to make, and reflect on, progress. In the strongest lessons, good quality questioning was used to extend students' understanding and allow teachers to assess progress. There were strong examples of marking that gave very subject-specific targets for improvement but this was not consistent across all subjects. When teaching was less successful, the pace of learning was slower because the teacher dominated the lesson and activities were not well matched to students' abilities.

At the time of the previous inspection, the headteacher and one of the deputy headteachers had been in post for three weeks. Since then there has been an increased and sustained strategic leadership of the school. Significant changes have been made to the structure of middle and senior leadership which have resulted in a much sharper focus on improving the quality of teaching and other aspects of provision. The increased effectiveness of leadership at all levels, including a robust performance management process, means that students' outcomes have improved. Analysis of achievement is exceptionally detailed and focused clearly on different groups to identify underachievement. The impact of this is seen in the narrowing of gaps between the attainment and progress of different groups in the school, as evidenced in the 2011 results. Middle leaders are held to account well for the standards in their areas and those spoken to during the inspection commented very positively about this and the way in which they are contributing to whole-school improvement. Structured programmes of quality assurance and effective professional development involve all leaders and have led to greater consistency and more secure self-evaluation. For example, the quality of teaching is judged on what is seen during lesson observations but also then linked to the impact of that teaching on students' learning over time. A well-established coaching programme means that teachers with different levels of experience and expertise work together to improve their practice. Senior leaders have created bespoke packages of support to move teaching from satisfactory to good and then to outstanding. Inadequate teaching has

been eradicated. All of these factors support the good progress the school is making in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The behaviour of students in lessons observed during the visit was good. They worked well in paired and group situations and responded quickly to their teachers' high expectations. Behaviour in the eating areas was orderly and there was minimal litter around the site. Students said that behaviour in lessons and around the site was now more orderly and that there were no 'no-go' areas. The school's approach to encouraging students to be self-managing at all times is having an increasingly good impact. Students understand the rewards and sanctions policy, and are pleased about the increased consistency with which teachers implement this. The behaviour management systems are embedded well into the day-to-day working of the school. These have had a positive impact on helping those students whose behaviour is challenging to manage their attitudes and on reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions. There is a structured and increasingly effective approach to re-integrating those students who have been excluded. Support staff, including lunchtime supervisors, feel well-supported by senior leaders and also commented on the more positive school environment. The school's own surveys of parents and carers indicate that they are happier with the standard of behaviour and the extent to which their children feel safe.

The school's specialisms are not, in the view of the headteacher, having a significant impact on students' achievement. This is currently under review.

External support from a partner school has been highly valued and the good impact of this is evident in the increasing effectiveness of middle leadership.

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

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Accelerate the rate of pupil progress by ensuring that at least 65% of teaching is good or better, with 10% outstanding, by December 2010, through:
 - embedding and sharing the existing good practice
 - ensuring that learning activities are matched to students' different abilities
 - providing resources that motivate and enthuse students and actively engage them in their learning
 - ensuring that students know how well they are doing, and how to improve, through regular high-quality marking and feedback.

- Build the school's own leadership capacity by developing leadership at all levels by:
 - increasing the rigour of whole-school and faculty systems for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work, including a better understanding of the performance of different groups of students, so that areas of underperformance are accurately identified and appropriate interventions are introduced
 - sharing the good practice of the most effective middle leaders through coaching and regular middle leader meetings.