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Mrs S Lewis
Headteacher
Sir Frederic Osborn School
Herns Lane
Welwyn Garden City
AL7 2AF

Dear Mrs Lewis

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Sir Frederic Osborn School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 December 2011 with Martin Marsh, additional inspector, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 9 June 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The 2011 examination results maintained most aspects of the improvements secured in the last two years. The proportion of students securing five higher grade GCSE passes including English and mathematics was below the national average, although results in science improved noticeably. The average points scored by students in the best eight examination results were close to the national average. The proportion of students making the expected progress in mathematics improved noticeably, although outcomes in English remained significantly below the national figure. More able students did well, although the proportion of middle-ability students securing five higher grade GCSE including English and mathematics was below average. GCSE results overall were more consistent than in previous years. Student progress in English and mathematics remains a key focus for senior staff. The school works with a consortium of local schools and colleges to provide post-16 education, and results in 2011 were broadly average: Year 12 AS level results were just above average, although outcomes in applied AS courses were more variable.



The school was operating a pre-planned curriculum focus day during this inspection. Older students were focussed on their English GCSE controlled assessments whilst younger students were developing their personal and social education (PSE) skills in line with the school's sports specialism. This was developed around an Olympic theme and was supported by athletes from the Dame Kelly Holmes Legacy Trust.

English lessons provided examples of good teaching with a clear focus on examination outcomes, driven on by effective use of GCSE mark schemes. Pace and challenge were appropriate and, in the most effective session, the teacher made very good use of insights and questions provided by the students. The communication skills and team work sessions led by visiting athletes provided a useful focus on the importance of detail and teamwork. In these sessions, the students responded well to clear instructions and new challenges. However, some of the classroom-based sessions provided by school staff for Years 7 and 8 lacked an appropriate focus on what the students would learn. These missed curriculum opportunities to enhance the students' key skills. Inconsistencies in curriculum planning, therefore, resulted in uneven impact on standards and achievement. HMI spent some time with senior staff evaluating examination results and relating the outcomes of curriculum decisions to pupil progress. Inspectors looked at a range of students' books in lessons and found that the best marking provided clear formative comments to support student progress. However, the quality of marking remains inconsistent and some books have not been marked regularly.

Behaviour around the school site and in lessons was generally good and exclusions are on a declining trend. Senior staff have done well to significantly improve attendance, which has risen steadily for the last three years and is above average. Persistent absence has been halved in the last year. The school's safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements.

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

David Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Further improve students' attainment by:
 - increasing the proportion of students who achieve a GCSE grade C in both English and mathematics
 - raising results in subjects which are performing less well than the majority
 - reducing the gap between the least and best teaching.

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan activities in lessons which are matched closely to the differing needs of students
 - making sure that teachers set appropriate pace and challenge in lessons to extend all students
 - increasing the quality and consistency of teachers' comments and feedback to students on their work so that they know exactly how to improve it.