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Mrs Walker  
Acting Headteacher  
Knowsley Park Centre for Learning  
Knowsley Park Lane  
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Dear Mrs Walker

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools with an additional focus on behaviour: Knowsley Park Centre for Learning**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 22 March 2012. I would be grateful if you could also pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body, the representative of the local authority and students.

The previous headteacher left shortly after the previous inspection and was replaced by an acting headteacher. There have been substantial changes in staffing, including the appointment of a new head of department in mathematics.

As a result of the inspection on 27 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 has made Satisfactory progress in making improvements and the effectiveness of the school in improving students' behaviour is good.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Achievement has improved steadily since the previous inspection, albeit from low starting points. Data on current attainment and progress, including results from external modular tests and coursework assessments demonstrate that this trend is rising further.

Students make much better progress in English as they move up through the school than they do in mathematics. Nevertheless, attainment in mathematics has improved over time and is now contributing to improvements in students' achievement overall. New leadership in mathematics has been successful in driving improvements in this area of the curriculum and there is now a shared common purpose across the department, focused on improving outcomes for students. A revision of the examination entry policy in mathematics now affords the school the opportunity to identify clearly students' weaknesses. Teaching and

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student groupings are then adjusted to address individual weaknesses and misapprehensions, thereby helping students to improve their subsequent performance.

External support from the local authority and other agencies has also been productive in improving this area of the curriculum. In addition, improvements in attendance are also contributing to the overall rising trend in achievement.

### **The quality of teaching**

Students speak highly of the improvements they have noticed in the quality of teaching. For example, they appreciate starter activities at the beginning of lessons; as one student commented: 'They directly address what you should have learned last lesson'. The school has improved well the consistency of practice in marking. During the inspection, most books seen were regularly marked, with clear advice to students on how to improve their work. School leaders have acted highly effectively in establishing robust procedures to monitor implementation of the school's policy in this respect.

Teachers now receive extensive information in order to plan lessons that meet the needs and match the abilities of all students. Students commented that lessons are more challenging than they used to be, particularly in mathematics. As a result, more-able students now make expected progress in this subject. However, the overall progress in tackling this area for improvement since the last inspection has been slow. Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching have lacked a sufficient emphasis on promoting students' learning and the monitoring of practice in the classroom has not been rigorous enough to ensure consistency.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students commented that behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. Procedures to manage poor behaviour are clearly understood by students and are now firmly embedded. Inspectors found that, for the most part, students behave well, moving around the school in an orderly fashion and working co-operatively in lessons. The rate of exclusion has reduced since the previous inspection, although it remains higher than average.

School leaders are now providing many more opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, assemblies encourage students to reflect on spiritual issues and registration time is used highly effectively. During the inspection, students were discussing together the social harm that racism can cause and were writing poems to challenge it.

High expectations and the implementation of effective strategies have led to improvements in attendance year on year. As a result, the gap between the attendance of students in the school and their peers nationally has narrowed. This improvement is shared across all year groups. The school has also been successful in reducing the numbers of students who are persistently absent.

## **The quality of leadership and management of the school**

The acting headteacher has made a marked impact in addressing most of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. However, the school acknowledges that further work remains to be done, particularly in improving the quality of teaching. Major changes in staffing and the restructuring of the senior leadership team have provided the school with a clear sense of direction and purpose.

The acting headteacher has been successful in establishing highly beneficial links, such as those with a headteacher who is a National Leader in Education and also with local outstanding primary schools. As a result, the perception of the school in the community is improving. Much improved systems for tracking students' progress and intervention are now embedded and are clearly leading to improvements in students' achievement. The school therefore demonstrates capacity for further 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

Joan Davis

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve students' achievement by raising attainment overall and particularly in mathematics.
- Increase the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - - using assessment information fully to plan challenging and relevant lessons
  - - ensuring that activities are closely matched to students' learning needs, including those of the more-able
  - - applying the Centre's policy for marking and feedback consistently.
- Raise attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average.