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Steven Morrison
Headteacher
Kingsdale Foundation School
Alleyn Park
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Dear Mr Morrison

Ofsted monitoring visit to Kingsdale Foundation School under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8–9 February 2012 with John Kennedy HMI, David Edwards HMI and Patricia MacLachlan, additional inspector. Thank you also for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the many staff and students who gave up their time to speak with us.

There have been a number of significant contextual changes in the two years since the school's last inspection. In September 2010 the school opened a sixth form; in November 2010 it became a converter academy. The school was re-awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark in May 2011 and now has a second specialism in mathematics.

Inspectors spent most of their time in discussions with teachers and members of support staff; while some meetings were held with small groups of staff, the majority were held with individuals. Most meetings were with members of staff selected by inspectors to provide a random and representative sample, but many staff also asked to meet an inspector to share their views and experiences. In all, inspectors met with over 90 members of staff. They also held discussions with several groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and a number of parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and visited 17 lessons. A sample group of around 100 older students completed the inspection questionnaire; inspectors considered their responses alongside around 30 responses from parents and carers, and approximately 150 responses from members of staff.

The large majority of the teaching seen during the inspection was good; some was satisfactory and some was outstanding. As a result, in the lessons observed, students were making good progress in their learning. The views of most students



parents and carers confirm this positive profile of teaching and learning. Teachers typically plan carefully to ensure that their lessons are interesting and meet the needs of students of different ability. They make good use of the time at the end of lessons to summarise and consolidate what students have learned. In the small proportion of less-effective lessons seen during the inspection, teachers did not interest or engage all students fully; as a result, they only made satisfactory progress in these lessons.

Students are polite, courteous and very friendly; their behaviour in lessons and around the site does them great credit. Staff and students who have been at the school for some time recognise and appreciate the significant improvement in students' behaviour. Students enjoy school and appreciate the good relationships they have with staff. Students feel safe and secure in school and say that incidents of bullying are rare and, when they occur, are dealt with quickly and effectively. The school's arrangements for safeguarding are robust and meet statutory requirements. Staff are provided with clear, detailed and helpful guidance to support their work in this area. Students concentrate well and remain highly focused in lessons.

The school's new sixth form has started well. Students who met with inspectors were generally very positive about their experiences, and Year 13 students point to the improvements that have been made over the past 18 months. Their main concern is the need for even more accommodation and space, a problem that leaders have recognised and are seeking to resolve.

The large majority of staff is very positive about the way in which the school is led and managed. Many praise the high quality of support that they receive from the school's middle and senior leaders. Similarly, many of these staff praise the leadership of the headteacher and the role that he has played in the school's improvement and development. Middle leaders value the support and guidance that they receive from their line managers in the senior leadership team. This large group of staff feel consulted, listened to and able to influence the school's direction. They recognise and appreciate the many opportunities for training and professional development; a number of staff at the start of their careers praised the high quality of their induction. Most of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire or spoke to inspectors share this very positive view of the school.

Some staff had very different views. Around 20% of staff who returned questionnaires or had face-to-face interviews with inspectors expressed concerns about aspects of the school's leadership and management. The issues that some raised are serious and substantial. These staff had concerns about the style of leadership being rigid and autocratic and said that it adversely affected their morale and effectiveness. They raised concerns about communication and felt that they have few genuine opportunities to influence the direction of school developments. They felt that bureaucracy placed unacceptable demands on them and they were not adequately supported to develop and improve as teachers. The views and anxieties expressed by this group raise serious concerns and the timing of the school's next inspection will be affected.

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

Christopher Russell
Her Majesty's Inspector