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26 June 2013

Mrs Alison Wright  
Headteacher  
Newall Green High School  
Greenbrow Road  
Wythenshawe  
Manchester  
M23 2SX

Dear Mrs Wright

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Newall Green High School**

Following my visit to your school on 25 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged as having serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in November 2012. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Ashworth  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2012**

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better by:
  - providing more high quality training, ensuring all teachers attend such training and checking to see that good practice is applied in the classroom
  - making sure that individual teachers act swiftly on advice and instructions given to improve their teaching
  - ensuring all teachers mark work regularly and thoroughly, so that students have clear advice about how to make their work and learning better.
  
- Raise achievement in mathematics by improving the teaching of this subject in the following ways:
  - ensuring that all teachers design lessons that are well matched to the needs of students, with appropriate support and challenge
  - encouraging students to apply their skills in a range of problem-solving activities that are related to the real world, so that students understand the importance of improving their numeracy skills.
  
- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average and reduce rates of exclusion further.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring all subject leaders are rigorous in following up identified weaknesses in their area of responsibility
  - making sure governors have a sharper focus on improving achievement and are more effective in holding the school to account for such improvement.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 25 June 2013**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, senior leaders, a group of students, the Chair and members of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and members of staff. The inspector made a series of brief visits to lessons in mathematics and English, looked at students' work and scrutinised documents, including the school's evaluation of progress and minutes of governors' meetings. The inspector also looked closely at evidence of senior leaders' monitoring of teaching and the work the school has been doing to improve the quality of teachers' marking.

### **Context**

A new head of mathematics was appointed in April 2013. This post is at assistant headteacher level and the post holder brings a wealth of experience to the role. Two deputy headteacher posts were filled through internal promotion in April 2013. Key teaching appointments have been made to the mathematics department; four new teachers and two trainee teachers from the Teach First programme will start in September 2013. In addition a Key Stage 3 coordinator for mathematics will take up their post in September 2013. Four staff are due to leave the mathematics department in July 2013.

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

The governing body has moved on in leaps and bounds since the previous monitoring inspection. Governors have grown in knowledge and understanding from the on-going training programme they are undertaking. A 'governor day' where governors visited lessons, scrutinised students' work and met with staff and students has had a very positive impact on school life. Students and staff welcome this closer involvement of the governing body, as it gives them the opportunity to feedback their views about the school. Separate committees of the governing body have been established to oversee the work of each of the schools in the federation. The committee that oversees Newall Green High School is asking sharper and more searching questions of senior leaders. Governors are rightly focusing their attention on key priorities such as performance management, students' progress and attendance.

The capacity of senior leadership has been enhanced significantly since the previous monitoring inspection. Very quickly, the two new deputy headteachers have taken up the reins for quality assurance and improving teaching. This has enabled the headteacher to take a more strategic approach to managing the school. She has introduced some innovative projects that focus on raising expectations and improving the quality of students' learning. She has drawn on external support and best practice from other schools to good effect in order to tackle key issues that are the root causes of underachievement. This includes some excellent work with the primary feeder schools which focuses on careers advice, literacy, numeracy and modern languages. As a consequence, the school has become more outward looking, staff are reinvigorated and there is a clearer understanding of what good and outstanding teaching looks like. The assistant headteacher responsible for mathematics has embraced his new role with vigour and the urgency needed to secure more rapid improvements in the autumn term. Staff in mathematics are benefiting from

the insight and wealth of experience he brings to the role. Very clear ground rules have been established for teaching in mathematics and monitoring systems are in place to ensure that the ambitious targets set by governors are realised by the time of the next inspection.

Middle leaders are growing in confidence and are becoming increasingly accountable for the quality of teaching in their area of responsibility. They benefit enormously from the guiding hands of the two deputy headteachers who are rightly focusing their attention on those areas that continue to show the greatest inconsistencies in terms of teaching, marking and students' progress.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Teaching across the school is improving. Recent monitoring carried out by senior leaders shows that most teaching is good or better. Students particularly enjoy their lessons in English, modern languages and humanities. This is because teachers in these subjects plan activities that are relevant, varied and, most of all, fun. They also provide students with opportunities to work collaboratively or alternatively give them space and time to think and explore independently. This makes students want to learn and do their best. Another common thread through the teaching in these subjects is that teachers inspire their students to aim high.
- Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching are effective and well managed. Senior leaders have identified where teaching is less than good; coaching and support is in place for those staff who need to improve their teaching. Middle leaders are tasked with monitoring how teachers successfully apply the learning from this support and coaching in the classroom.
- Although not yet consistently good in all subjects, the quality of teachers' marking and their feedback to students has improved significantly. Instances of excellent marking, for example in English, result in students feeling enthused and motivated. In particular, students welcome the time that their teachers give to provide them with verbal feedback on their work. Students say this makes them feel valued and motivates them to do even better.
- Students' behaviour in lessons reflects the improvement in teaching. Because students find their learning more interesting and enjoyable there are fewer instances of them switching off and distracting others. This means that fixed-term exclusions have reduced and are currently below the national average.
- Overall attendance is improving quickly but remains below average. Actions to improve attendance have generally been successful with students in Years 7 to 10 and attendance for these year groups is on target. However, attendance for the Year 11 cohort that has now left the school was too low. The school's work with some of the most persistent non-attenders has been a stunning success. The overall rate for persistent absence shows a significant decline and is currently lower than average.

## **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The variation in quality of teaching in mathematics remains too wide. In order to secure pass grades in GCSE examinations much of the stronger teaching has been focused on Key Stage 4. This has meant that weaker teaching in Key Stage 3 has resulted in a legacy of underachievement flowing through the school and teachers constantly fire-fighting to get the best results possible. However, staffing has been stabilised and the team strengthened from September 2013. There are already signs of some improvement in teaching. For example, teachers are making better use of information and communication technology to scaffold teaching and learning. They are also designing tasks that are relevant and stretching rather than relying on worksheets.
- The decline in students' achievement in mathematics has been halted. School tracking data suggest that the proportion of the current Year 11 cohort that made expected progress in mathematics has crept to below rather than well below the national average. Levels of attainment remain low in mathematics, with just over half the cohort predicted to pass the subject with a good grade. The data suggest that the gaps in the rate of progress made by different groups of students are not closing quickly enough. There are promising signs lower down the school where increasingly higher proportions of students are on track to make the progress they are capable of.

## **External support**

The local authority continues to provide high quality support that is having a tangible impact on improvements in the school. The on-going training and support that is being provided to governors is helping them to fulfil their roles with greater insight and rigour. Regular audits of the mathematics department provide senior leaders with a clear steer on whether changes are making any difference to the students' experience. Most importantly, the training provided to those teachers to help them deliver teaching that is consistently good is having a marked impact. The proportion of teaching that is not yet good is reducing quickly. The headteacher has established links with a school in similar circumstances that has been judged to be outstanding. Senior leaders have drawn on best practice from this school and have made plans for September that will result in significant changes to the way students' learning is monitored and supported.