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11 February 2014

Ms Sally Coulton  
Headteacher  
Ellis Guilford School and Sports College  
Bar Lane  
Basford  
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NG6 0HT

Dear Ms Coulton

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Ellis Guilford School and Sports College**

Following my visit to your school on 11 February 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. 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 section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in November 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders. I also met with a member of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated. Additionally, school documentation relating to attendance, behaviour and leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching were scrutinised. I visited a number of classes and spoke informally to some students about their work.

#### **Context**

There have been no significant contextual changes since the recent section 5 inspection.

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

Leaders have responded positively and effectively to the findings from the recent section 5 inspection. They clearly understand the pace of change that is needed, and are fully committed to bringing it about. The school action plan is sound. It prioritises the actions leaders must take in order to raise the achievement of students. Leaders have made it clear how the impact of these actions will be evaluated through broad targets for achievement and attendance. However, these targets are not yet detailed enough, nor do they contain sufficient milestones against which the governing body can monitor the progress the school should make in order to be removed from a category of concern.

Since the inspection, school leaders have taken a number of steps to improve the quality of teaching, to raise achievement and to improve attendance. Leaders now use effective systems to monitor teaching and to ensure that teachers receive tailored support in order to improve further. This approach has been refined to focus closely on the aspects for improvement identified during the inspection and to ensure that the responsibility for improving teaching is distributed widely across subject leaders. The work of all leaders has been checked to ensure that their judgements, and the feedback they give to teachers, are accurate and detailed. Teachers now receive swift support, as leaders have created a range of regular training opportunities. During this inspection, it was evident that teachers are responding positively to the support that has been given, for example through challenging 'going for gold' objectives in their lessons.

Leaders' analysis of the progress students make is now much sharper. A small core group of leaders meets weekly to discuss the progress of current Year 11 students. Their regular analysis quickly identifies any students in need of additional support. Subject leaders have been trained to use 'progress matrices,' which are increasingly empowering teachers to identify any student not on track to achieve their 'must get' targets. In addition, leaders' analysis of information makes it much clearer which students, in which years, and at what times of the week are likely to be in danger of not attending. They have issued clear guidance to students about the consequences of not attending school and dedicated staff are responsible for overseeing contact with families. At the time of this inspection, attendance had improved marginally on the same period last year. However, the full impact of leaders' work to improve attendance has yet to be seen.

Governors remain focused on school improvement. The governing body committee structure was changed following the section 5 inspection so it more closely aligns with the identified priorities for improvement. With school leaders, governors have established a parents' forum intended to improve communication with parents. Governors recognise that they would benefit from some ongoing external checking of their work to ensure they present the right level of challenge and support to senior leaders.

The local authority's statement of action clarifies what additional support the school will receive from external consultants and through other school-to-school support. It rightly recognises that school leaders have the capacity to steer improvement and that the authority's role should be one of external quality assurance. Additionally, the plan outlines actions to help leaders to increase attendance and make alternative provision for students who exhibit very challenging behaviour.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Nottingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Darley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**