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6 June 2014

Mr Richard Fitzgerald  
Headteacher  
Langdon Park Community School  
Byron Street  
Poplar  
London  
E14 0RZ

Dear Mr Fitzgerald

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Langdon Park Community School**

Following my visit to your school on 5 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. Plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- write, in partnership with the local authority, a school improvement plan for the period September 2014 to April 2016 – to include sharp actions and targets to secure a 'good' Ofsted judgement by December 2015
- ensure that all staff are absolutely clear that they must insist, relentlessly, on the highest standards in students' work; and that, when improvements are demanded, subsequent work is markedly better.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings were held with you, four heads of faculty, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Head of Secondary Learning and Achievement from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Accompanied in turn by the four heads of faculty, I made short visits to 16 lessons. These visits were primarily to look at students' work and teachers' assessments.

## **Main findings**

Throughout our discussions, you left me in no doubt about your vision and ambition for the school. You understand the issues facing the school, and since the inspection you have continued to introduce new systems for collecting and analysing data. You have sought to increase parental involvement. I understand that you needed to take immediate, short-term action when you took up post in September 2013. Not least, this was to ensure that current Year 11 students achieved better examination results than last year's cohort. However, given the required timescale for the school to move from 'requires improvement' to 'good' – the school is likely to be re-inspected by December 2015 at the latest – it is surprising that the school improvement plan only covers the academic year 2013/2014. Furthermore, some other key school improvement actions – such as the reorganisation of line management responsibilities and the residential weekend for middle managers to develop teaching and to raise achievement – have yet to happen. With only a few weeks to go before the end of the school year, it is critical that a school improvement plan is put in place for the next two years, to guide the school until next full inspection and beyond. This plan should be written in partnership with the local authority and approved by the governing body before the end of the Summer term.

Since the last inspection, some improvements have been made to the quality of teachers' marking. In the mathematics department, students have been issued with 'Preparing for GCSE' workbooks. These are intended to provide them with detailed feedback on their work, to which they are required to respond with their own comments and corrections. In practice, the effectiveness of these books in different classes is much too varied. In science, where some tangible improvements in the amount and detail of teachers' marking are evident, the fact remains that the quantity and quality of students' work is too often below what might reasonably be expected. Even where marking identified that work was incomplete or poorly presented, significant improvements did not result. Too often, I saw examples where the teacher had told the student that improvements were required, but the next piece of work was no better.

While teachers and leaders now have better access to data concerning students' achievement, the use and accuracy of this data still require considerable

improvement. For example, while data suggested that students were working at or above expected levels, the quality of work in their books suggested otherwise. Overall, I did not see assessment being used well in practice to promote high standards. Targets set for students are not sharply focussed enough on subject-specific skills and knowledge. One exception I saw during my visit was in a Year 9 dance lesson, where subject-specific targets for improvement were leading to students achieving very well. For example, expert guidance had been given to a group of boys in executing lift movements safely but also with artistry. The result was a confident, controlled and expressive performance of good quality.

Minutes of governing body meetings show that governors continue to ask searching questions about the school's performance. Extensive discussions took place following the section 5 inspection. The Chair of the Governing Body, a former headteacher, brings valuable experience to the role. However, governors have not given enough consideration to the long-term strategic direction of the school, as seen by the lack of a school improvement plan from September 2014. As only a small number of governors were able to attend the feedback meeting at the end of my visit, I have arranged to attend the full governing body meeting on Monday 30 June 2014 when I will be able to discuss my findings in detail.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority has enlisted the support of an experienced recently-retired headteacher as a mentor during your first year in post. The local authority has also provided a support plan for the school, together with challenge from the school's Targeted Intervention Group. The mentor headteacher and the local authority have a wealth of expertise and experience. However, evidence from my visit suggests more intensive support from the local authority is necessary, particularly in ensuring that the school's strategic improvement plan is in place and is monitored robustly.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Tower Hamlets.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**