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13 October 2014  
Kate Evans  
Acting Principal  
The Netherhall School  
Queen Edith's Way  
Cambridge  
CB1 8NN

Dear Mrs Evans

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Netherhall School**

Following my visit to your school on 10 October 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the school action plan identifies measurable targets in addition to actions to be taken
- ensure that the governing body acts quickly on the findings of the external review of governance, particularly in the effective deployment of pupil premium funding, so that the needs of these students are met more effectively
- refine the school's systems for assessing students' levels of attainment so that their progress can be tracked more reliably and so that teachers can plan for learning which offers an appropriate level of support and challenge, including for those students who have special educational needs

- ensure that teachers whose teaching is not yet good are supported through the sharing of good practice, and that marking in the school accelerates students' progress.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, the Chair and three other members of the governing body, groups of students from Key Stages 3, 4 and the sixth form and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plan. I visited a number of lessons, accompanied by you and the Acting Associate Principal, to observe students' learning and to look at their books. I also scrutinised the school's records of recruitment checks on staff.

## **Context**

The substantive Principal is currently not in school, and the school has been led by an Acting Principal and an Acting Associate Principal since 1 September 2014 at the request of the local authority.

## **Main findings**

The action plan produced by the school following the previous inspection was not focused enough on driving school improvement and did not receive approval from the governing body. You have now produced a more focused plan which rightly prioritises key aspects of school improvement. This plan is at an early stage of development, but has been contributed to by subject leaders which provides them with greater ownership for the actions contained within it. The plan now needs to be refined so that it identifies exactly what you aim to achieve when you measure for progress at various points throughout the year. It currently focuses more on actions rather than outcomes.

Systems for monitoring and measuring students' progress have not been reliable in the past. Consequently, teachers have not been secure in their assessments of students' progress and in setting targets, and their planning for learning has not always met the needs of all groups of students in their classes. Some groups of students have not made the progress expected of them, including those who have special educational needs and those eligible for extra support through pupil premium funding. Students' attainment fluctuates year on year, but remains stubbornly low in science. Students following vocational courses performed better in 2014, and students in Year 13 achieved better than those before them.

Although you and the Acting Associate Principal have only been in the school since the start of September, staff and students are positive about the impact of your leadership so far, particularly in identifying the things which need to be tackled

quickly. Staff are now more noticeably present around the school, and management systems are being implemented more efficiently.

The quality of teaching over time is too variable and you have plans in place to work with those teachers whose teaching is not yet consistently good. Teachers' marking is also of variable quality. My scrutiny of students' books and discussions with students shows that there is some good quality marking, where teachers give helpful guidance and to which students offer meaningful responses, but this good quality is not spread equally across the school.

Members of the governing body are about to undergo a further external review of their effectiveness, in particular relating to their role of ensuring that the funding available for pupil premium students is spent to best effect. They have sensibly decided to link individual governors to aspects of the school action plan. This will allow them to monitor the work of those leading the improvement initiatives and the impact these leaders are having on driving school improvement.

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 brokered the interim leadership from Bottisham Village College to offer much-needed support to strengthen leadership capacity. For example, the Chair of the Governing Body at Bottisham Village College has coached the Chair of the Governing Body at The Netherhall School. Bottisham Village College also plans to share its good practice in teaching to strengthen weaker teaching in this school. The local authority also monitors the school's progress through its half-termly review meetings which are attended by the Acting and Associate Principals and the Chair of the Governing Body.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**