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5 November 2014

Ms Sue Higgins, Executive Headteacher  
Ms Anna Peduzzi, Associate Headteacher  
Acland Burghley School  
Burghley Road  
London  
NW5 1UJ

Dear Ms Higgins and Ms Peduzzi,

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Acland Burghley School**

Following my visit to your school on 4 November 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 carried out without notice. It was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2013. The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- increase significantly the challenge for the most-able students throughout the school, including in the sixth form, but setting higher expectations in lessons and by increasing opportunities for them to write at length
- ensure that systems for recording and reporting any instances of bullying are reviewed so that they can be easily analysed and reported on.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the Executive Headteacher and Associate Headteacher, two members of the governing body, and two representatives from the local authority. The purpose of these meetings was to

discuss the action taken since the last monitoring inspection. Informal discussions were held with students and members of staff. Short visits were made to 12 lessons.

## **Context**

Shortly after the first 'requires improvement' monitoring visit, the headteacher left the school. The headteacher of Parliament Hill School was appointed as Executive Headteacher, with her deputy at Parliament Hill being appointed as Associate Headteacher at Acland Burghley. Following two unsuccessful campaigns to appoint a permanent headteacher, this arrangement has been confirmed until the end of the current academic year.

An audit of governors' skills has been completed and clear recommendations for improvement have been identified. In the past few weeks, a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed. He has previously been Chair at a number of other schools in the local authority and brings with him a wealth of experience.

## **Main findings**

When I last visited the school, in February 2014, I judged that senior leaders were not taking effective action. I was extremely concerned about behaviour, about standards of presentation, and about the low expectations that were being set in lessons. I also recommended that an independent audit of governance should take place.

Since my visit, the quality of the school environment has improved considerably. Although some of this is due to the completion of building works, display in classrooms and corridors has also improved. A considerable drive has gone into improving the quality of presentation in students' books. Members of staff have made commendable efforts to improve the presentation of their classrooms and to show much higher professional standards through their own personal presentation.

I also have no doubt whatsoever that students' behaviour in lessons and around the school site has been transformed. Students and members of staff told me, without exception, that a combination of clearly defined rules together with strong support from senior leaders has brought about this change. I saw none of the excessive boisterousness that I reported in February; I heard no unacceptable language; and working relationships in classrooms were extremely positive.

A comprehensive new behaviour policy was adopted in September 2014, which includes a clear stance on bullying. The school has systems in place to record any incidents of bullying when they happen, and was able to show how action was taken to support the perpetrators and those who were bullied. However, these systems have not been reviewed alongside the new behaviour policy. It is my view that such

a review would help the school to provide quicker identification of any repeated instances of bullying that may occur.

All of these improvements have helped to turn Acland Burghley back in the right direction. There is a much greater confidence present in the school. One Year 9 student told me; 'I am so much happier at school now. I like having the rules, and I like it that teachers expect more of me. My parents are happier too'. Conversations with individual members of staff gave similarly positive messages, particularly about support and challenge from the new leadership team.

I am pleased to confirm that senior leaders and governors are now taking effective action. However, there remains much more to do in student achievement before the school can be considered good overall. The provisional 2014 examination results show that the achievement of the most-able students is still not good enough. Not enough of them earned grades A and A\* at GCSE or grades A\*-B at A-Level. My scrutiny of students' books and work in lessons confirmed that the most-able are not being stretched sufficiently. One particular issue is the extent to which students are expected to write at length. Many are articulate and highly cultured in their oral contributions; however, I did not see this being translated into similarly sophisticated or extended writing. This was the case in subjects across the curriculum. In some instances, the tasks set for students were too low-level and were more appropriate to a younger age-group.

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 provided good challenge and support. Following the first requires improvement visit, the local authority issued a formal warning notice the school. Officers have been instrumental in brokering the leadership support from Parliament Hill School, and have conducted regular reviews of the school's progress. The local authority behaviour consultant has contributed to the significant improvements in students' behaviour.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Camden.

Yours sincerely

**Mark Phillips**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**