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Mr H. Joyce
Rye Hills School
Redcar Lane
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Dear Mr Joyce

OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WHOSE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS HAS BEEN JUDGED SATISFACTORY

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 7th December 2006, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to your colleagues and also to the students, especially those who came to talk to me.

As a result of the inspection in December 2005, the school was asked to:

- ensure the vision and overall priorities for improvement are clearly articulated and understood by all stakeholders;
- ensure that all students, particularly the more able, are sufficiently challenged in their learning;
- ensure the personal and academic needs of all students are being addressed in a sympathetic and sensitive way;
- improve the quality of teaching and learning, including increased opportunities for active and independent learning; and
- implement plans to improve the use of assessment data in order to target support for students and raise standards.

In addition, the report judged students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to be inadequate overall; the same judgement was made in relation to provision for their personal, social, health and citizenship (PHSCE) education.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement.

The school's specialist status as a sports college has been a significant factor in promoting improvement, both in relation to the issues raised in the inspection and more widely. It has provided an impetus for improvements to teaching and learning and the curriculum. Teachers and students can identify

clear benefits. For example, students gained confidence and developed social and physical skills as they enjoyed participating in the college's successful 'Festival of Sport and Leisure' at the end of the summer term.

There has been good progress in ensuring that the school's overall priorities are clear; raising achievement is the prime objective. The school improvement plan identifies clearly the action which the school is taking in response to the inspection issues. The timescales and success criteria are not always sufficiently precise for the plan to be an effective tool for monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes, but accountability is clear. The responsibilities of all middle leaders are now more clearly determined and focused on outcomes for students. The restructuring of the pastoral team is a significant factor. The new Progress and Support Leaders (PSLs), who have replaced the heads of year, together with the Directors of Key Stages 3 and 4, have responsibility for monitoring student progress. This shift in responsibility has been supported well by training, especially in the use of data to equip those staff for the new role. The training is part of the school's improvement of the use of data to target support for students. Although the electronic system is not yet fully operational, this is imminent. As a result of improved data collection, the PSLs now have a much better overview of the performance of individual students. As a result, they are in a better position to target intervention and support than at this stage last year.

The school has made good progress in improving teaching and learning. This has included staff training to develop expertise as well as systematic monitoring by senior and middle leaders. The school's evidence and the evidence from this visit, indicates that there is greater consistency in lesson structure, including the use of learning objectives, although the quality of the objectives is still variable. Teachers are using a range of approaches to teaching and learning to vary lesson activities and to promote independent learning. The school's focus on assessment for learning and its work on thinking skills are contributing to this improvement. Teachers are making increasingly effective use of National Curriculum level descriptions and GCSE criteria, together with peer- and self-assessment, to help students to understand how to improve their work. These improvements in teaching and learning are also benefiting the more able students; performance at the higher level 6 at Key Stage 3 and A*/A grades at GCSE increased in 2006. There is evidence that teachers are paying attention to developing students' literacy skills, including developing their vocabulary and their writing skills. As the school has identified, the quality of marking remains too variable, but it is being targeted.

The school has reviewed its provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision is now more sharply focused on meeting individual needs and promoting achievement, either through small group support or through support within subject areas. The allocation of classroom assistants to subject areas is developing the expertise of these colleagues, as well as enabling the subject leaders to target the support more efficiently.

The school has reviewed its provision for PHSCE to ensure that this is now more coherent and meets statutory requirements. Although the school has not yet developed appropriate ways of identifying students' spiritual development, it has taken steps taken to highlight more clearly where this is being promoted. Similarly, the school has some anecdotal evidence of students' cultural development, but can identify provision to promote this more clearly.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Heather Richardson

Her Majesty's Inspector