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Mr Neil Sherman  
The Headteacher  
Harlington Community School  
Pinkwell Lane  
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Dear Mr Sherman

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 7 November 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. The staff I met were helpful, professional and clearly committed to resolving the issues of concern. The students were articulate, confident, friendly and positive about recent changes. In the words of one, 'People here are now addicted to learning.' The results of national tests in 2007 showed good improvements in standards at Key Stage 3 and are a testament to an effective response to concerns raised in March.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection in March 2007, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards and improve the progress of all students throughout the school.
- Improve teaching and learning and the use of assessment so that lessons are at least satisfactory and mostly good or better and that work matches students' abilities.
- Improve some students' behaviour in lessons and in the main school.

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.

Provisional results for 2007 at Key Stage 3 remain below average overall. Standards, however, have risen, particularly in English which saw a significant improvement in the proportion of students gaining both the expected and higher levels. Standards in English are now broadly average by the end of Year 9. Results in English, mathematics and science exceeded the school's targets and the targets for the current year 9 have been revised upwards as a result. The evidence indicates that students in Key Stage 3, irrespective of ability or gender, are beginning to make

good progress during their time in the school. The school has put into place effective strategies to target under-performance and raise standards at GCSE. However, it is still too soon to see their impact on public examination results. Standards by the end of Year 11 in 2007 remained well below average and did not meet the school's targets for the percentage of students achieving 5+ A\*-C grades. The proportion of students achieving 5+ A\*-G grades was not as far below average as in previous years, however, and the vast majority of learners left Year 11 with a qualification. The school was able to provide evidence to show that standards in Years 10 and 11 are beginning to improve, both in terms of attainment and the amount of progress students make in their learning. Senior leaders are able to show, for example, that students who do not attend regularly (the school is designated as a Persistent Absence school) achieve less well than their peers. Strategies have been put into place to improve attendance and these are beginning to have a positive impact on both attendance and achievement. Predicted results for 2008 are expected to meet the school's targets and show a significant increase over those for 2007.

Teaching and learning have improved and the proportion of good lessons has increased since the last inspection. Students say that most lessons are interesting, challenging and fun and that there are good opportunities for them to find things out for themselves. They think the quality of marking has improved and say that most teachers explain clearly what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. Lessons seen during the monitoring visit support these views. In a Year 9 English lesson, for example, students confidently and enthusiastically rearranged words to form complex and compound sentences within a 30 second time limit. Recently introduced assessment and tracking systems show that teachers are beginning to make more accurate use of data to track students' progress and give more accurate predictions of their attainment.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school has improved. This is confirmed by students, who are positive about the new policy. They feel that teachers handle low-level disruption in a more consistent way and speak enthusiastically about the new rewards and sanctions system. Teachers confirm that fewer lessons are disturbed by low-level disruption and that they can spend more time teaching their students as a result. These positive views are supported by both school data on behaviour and by evidence gathered during the monitoring visit.

The impact of the local authority's intervention in the school has been a key factor in the good progress being made. The personnel involved know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Their training and advice is helping the school to focus on what needs to be done to raise standards and address the issues for improvement and to be more evaluative in judging the effectiveness of its actions.

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

Yours sincerely

Dr Lynn Bappa  
Additional Inspector