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Hilary Macaulay  
Principal  
West London Academy  
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Dear Hilary

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 December 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would also like to thank students who gave their time to talk to me. They were confident and articulate and good ambassadors for the academy.

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.

There has been one significant change in staffing since the academy was last inspected; the post of Assistant Principal, Director of Further Education, was filled at the start of this academic year.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the achievement of pupils and students.

As a result of the inspection in September 2006, the academy was asked to improve the effectiveness of the sixth-form provision so that it appropriately meets the needs of all students. It was also asked to make sure that all staff maintain consistent expectations of students' conduct and use effective strategies to deal with any unsatisfactory behaviour.

The academy's latest test and examination results were, overall, still below national averages, but there were good improvements at Key Stages 1 and 3. Pupils and students continue to achieve well and students made exceptional progress in English at Key Stage 3. The value added between Key Stages 2 and 4 puts the academy just outside the top 10% of schools nationally. The academy tracks assiduously the

progress of every pupil and confidently predicts significant improvements in GCSE results at the end of this academic year. It is also worth noting that the academy's attendance rates are above average.

Provision in the sixth form is improving and is satisfactory. A broader range of courses is offered and is to be further extended at the start of the next academic year. The academy also intends to apply to offer students the International Baccalaureate. Students have many opportunities to participate in sport, whether studying it to examination level or not, and to undertake other activities which enrich the curriculum. Students know that they are role models for younger students and take this seriously. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go before the breadth and balance in the curriculum fully reflect the students' needs and aspirations. The criteria for entry to courses at different levels have been strengthened in order to make sure that no student starts a course in which they will be unable to achieve success. These steps came too late for students who had already embarked on their studies, and meant that some did not do well in their examinations last year. The students attained well in vocational courses but results in academic subjects were poor. Students now have an area for independent study and say that they value the support and guidance of their teachers. Leadership of the sixth form has been strengthened and there is a clear sense of direction. The Post-16 improvement plan shows that developments are planned in important areas but it lacks quantifiable criteria for measuring its success.

The students spoke positively about the impact the academy's sports specialism has on the opportunities available to them. They were not so clear about how the specialism in enterprise affected them.

The academy has taken great steps forward in improving students' behaviour and the ways in which teachers manage it. Students themselves report that they have no particular concerns about behaviour and that lessons are rarely disrupted to the extent that it interferes with their learning. They feel safe at the academy and value the fact that staff are highly visible. They also appreciate the high level of interest that is taken in their personal development and in their academic achievement. The academy's policy is not to exclude students except in exceptional circumstances. Over the past two years, the level of fixed-term and permanent exclusions has dropped dramatically. This has been matched by a drop in the number of students referred for internal exclusion. Many students have particular difficulties in their lives which, for a few, lead to challenging behaviour. The academy goes to great lengths to find out the reasons and triggers for the misbehaviour of individual students. Steps are taken to support teachers in managing these individuals and to help the students themselves get the most out of lessons, with some notable successes. The academy works extremely well with a wide range of other agencies, including the local authority, to support the most vulnerable students.

One of the key reasons for the progress noted is the passion, enthusiasm and high expectations that senior leaders bring to their jobs. They clearly have the academic and personal needs of the students at the forefront of their minds. In addition, the systems for managing and sharing information about individuals and groups of pupils and students are excellent, supporting teachers well in their work.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill  
Her Majesty's Inspector