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Mr Jeremy Hodkinson
The Headteacher
Cleeve Park School
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Dear Mr Hodkinson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 March 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass my thanks to the staff and the local authority representatives who also met with me.

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 on 17 and 18 January 2007, the school was asked to:

- identify and remedy underachievement more rapidly through effective analysis of students' performance
- raise standards and achievement in English, particularly in Year 11
- raise standards of achievement in the sixth form
- increase levels of attendance.

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.

The school has taken robust steps to strengthen both senior and middle leadership in the year since the last inspection. A recently appointed senior manager now has responsibility for the analysis of students' performance. Effective whole-school systems are in place to check students' progress each term and to identify underachievement. The underlying causes of slower-than-expected progress are carefully identified. The impact of these procedures is visible in teachers' increasingly successful use of assessment information in planning lessons which is leading to better progress for students. Middle managers are using assessment information from trial examinations to boost the results of students who are close to the boundary between Grade C and D. There has been good progress in setting up whole-school assessment systems to analyse students' performance and satisfactory progress in remedying underperformance.

The school's data indicate that currently 39% of Year 11 students are likely to achieve five higher GCSE grades that include English and mathematics, in line with the school's targets. This is in sharp contrast to the Year 11 examination results last year when less than a third of the students gained five or more A* to C grades that included English and mathematics. A similar picture of improvement is evident at Key Stage 3. At least two thirds of Year 8 are expected to gain Level 5 in English, mathematics and science. The checks on progress show that Year 8 students are making faster progress than Year 9.

In 2007, Year 11 students made satisfactory progress in English and half of the cohort gained Grade C or better; a rise of 12 percentage points on the previous results. Standards in Year 9 also rose slightly in English with students' overall progress similar to that of the previous year. Students in Year 8 also sat the national tests in English in 2007. Just under two thirds of them gained the expected Level 5. Careful analysis of students' performance has identified that reading skills are weak when pupils join the school. Plans are in hand to provide sharply focused support for students based on sound diagnostic assessments. The English department is now staffed mainly by specialist teachers and this has contributed in no small measure to the recent examination improvements.

Sixth-form students made better progress in 2007 than in previous years across a range of subjects, supported by good and improved learning resources, supervised study and the drive to monitor their progress rigorously. This progress was evident across a range of subjects, but particularly so in advanced courses in science, sociology and design and technology. Engineering, the school's specialism, is under-represented in the sixth form as very few students opt to follow the available courses. The school has been largely successful in ensuring satisfactory or better progress for its current Year 12 and 13 students. School data indicate that most are likely to meet their personal targets in their chosen subjects. Half of Year 13 is expected to achieve A to C grades in advanced courses, a marked improvement on previous performance. The school has well-considered plans to adapt the post-16 curriculum to better meet the needs of its students. More Year 11 students than previously intend to join the sixth form in the new academic year. Progress in raising standards in the sixth form is satisfactory.

The school has made good progress in increasing the students' level of attendance, which has risen by two percentage points this year and is now close to 91%. The school has taken all possible measures to improve attendance and there has been a reduction in the number of persistent absentees. A full time attendance officer has been appointed and is well supported by the education welfare service. Particular attention has been given to Year 7 so that early intervention can help prevent later non-attendance. Over 94% of Year 7 attends regularly. Generally, students have responded well to rewards and recognition for good attendance. The termly tracking of students' performance against attendance is beginning to highlight for some students the importance of being present in class.

The local authority (LA) and other external agencies have provided good support for the school. Practical financial support, for example, has allowed raising attainment projects to continue beyond their normal funding. Significant time from LA subject

consultants is successfully helping middle leaders in the drive to accelerate the students' progress. The LA intends to protect the school from too many casual entrants with difficult histories in other institutions. Discussions are in hand to reduce the school's standard admissions number in the near future.

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

I am copying this letter to the Secretary for State, to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bexley.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan
Additional Inspector