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Mr Des Malone
The Headteacher
The John Roan School
Maze Hill
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London
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Dear Mr Malone

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 18 June 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please do extend my thanks to the managers I interviewed and in particular, the teachers and students whom I observed in lessons.

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 28 and 29 November 2007, the school was asked to

- Raise the standard of behaviour in classrooms, around the school and in transit between the two sites.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Years 7 to 11.
- Work together with the local authority to improve the standard of accommodation rapidly, so that it provides a more conducive climate for learning, and to ensure that a longer-term solution is swiftly reached.

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, in raising students' achievement and improving standards of behaviour. Since the last inspection and with the arrival of the new headteacher in January 2007, the school has successfully tackled two of the three areas. The headteacher has a clear strategic vision and determination to raise standards of behaviour, improve teaching and ensure a better learning environment. Over the last six months there have been key changes in the management team and teaching staff, modifications in relation to student discipline codes and procedures and heavy investment in the learning environment and computing facilities. These actions are beginning to have an impact.

Behaviour in lessons has much improved; students work with greater concentration and there are very few instances of poor behaviour disrupting learning. Whilst students' behaviour in corridors and at change of lessons is no longer inadequate, students would benefit from following a 'corridor etiquette' that encourages them to move around the buildings, on both sites, in an orderly and respectful manner, and to arrive on time for lessons.

In those few instances, where behaviour in lessons is inappropriate to learning, this is often because a teacher has not managed effectively the fielding of questions and answers and allows students to call out responses. In some instances, the setting of a learning task does not match the students' ability. The school has had some success this term in tackling the rising trend in fixed term exclusions. This has been achieved through a systematic procedure that has lowered staff tolerance levels towards poor and disruptive behaviour.

Most teaching and learning has not improved significantly since the last inspection and progress in this area is inadequate. This is primarily owing to the internal teaching observation scheme. This has inappropriately placed too much emphasis on teacher led activities with insufficient focus on students' learning and the impact of teaching on achievement and standards. Consequently, the school has not been able to judge itself accurately, and has not evaluated what it needs to do to improve teaching and learning. The school has not yet developed an assessment for learning strategy that could help teachers use student attainment data in planning tasks and activities that are matched to students of all abilities and levels, enabling all to make good progress. In 2007, the achievement of students between Years 7 and 11 was satisfactory and standards below national averages in Year 9 examinations and in Year 11 for 5 A*-C GCSEs (with and without English and mathematics).

In most lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of contextually relevant materials in lessons and in some instances, can skilfully engender a sense of enjoyment and fun in their subjects. The school has put in place a sound process of academic review and evaluation for students and those who have been identified as underachieving, receive assertive mentoring and additional subject support.

In too many lessons, however, there is little basic concept checking or assessment of how well students have understood what is being taught. Assessment of students' written work is very variable. A number are not given sufficiently detailed feedback on how to improve, even when they have self identified gaps in their knowledge or skills. Little use is made of writing frames or scaffolding to help students develop writing and speaking skills in a more structured way. Given the numbers of students identified with low reading ages and low numeracy levels, the school has not yet put in place a cross curriculum literacy, numeracy and language strategy, to successfully develop these skills.

The capability of learning support staff to address the special needs and literacy and language needs of students in lessons is severely limited. This is because they do not

have a defined role, are not involved in lesson planning and do not give students sufficient opportunities for independent learning.

The school has been swift to improve the standard of accommodation through a significant investment in computing equipment and in the refurbishment and redecoration of some parts of the accommodation. This has successfully contributed to a much more conducive and pleasant learning environment in the short term, especially, on the Westcombe Park site. The school is currently involved in major changes to accommodation through a BSF project.

The school has worked successfully with the local authority to address the main priorities and has developed a robust action planning process. This has enabled the headteacher to give a strong steer to his senior and middle managers, with very constructive input from the external School Improvement Partner and LA Adviser. The leadership team has also benefited from good mentoring support from City Challenge and interventions from other external partners. The dynamic presence of the new headteacher has been critical in informing the rapid change of pace against two of the three priorities. Further, he has engendered shared understanding at the most senior and middle levels, of what the school now needs to do, to make significant improvements in the area of teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector