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25 November 2008

Mr David Green  
The Headteacher  
Baverstock Foundation School and Specialist Sports College  
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Dear Mr Green

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 17 November 2008, 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 the pupils and governors who also spent time in conversation 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 28 and 29 February 2008, the school was asked to: raise achievement in mathematics and science by improving the teaching of those subjects; to ensure consistent practice in the use of assessment to help show pupils how to improve their work; to ensure work provided in lessons is appropriate for pupils' different starting points; and, to improve the accessibility of school buildings for pupils with disabilities.

Since the school's last inspection, changes have taken place in the organisation and staffing of mathematics and science, which were the subjects of the notice to improve. In mathematics, three new specialist teachers have been appointed, and the subject has been incorporated into a faculty structure alongside information and communication technology (ICT). A new head of science has been in place since July.

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 and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Standards in mathematics, while remaining below average, improved markedly in 2008 at the end of Years 9 and 11. The school's rigorous programme for identifying Year 11 pupils at risk of underachieving in the subject at GCSE and intervening with additional programmes to boost performance was successful for many pupils. The consequent improvement in mathematics results at GCSE grades A\* to C, from 31% in 2007 to 39% in 2008, brought the school very close to reaching the government's national minimum target for pupils gaining five or more A\* to C grades inclusive of English and mathematics. Test results for Year 9 pupils in 2008 showed some good progress in mathematics for higher attaining pupils, although too many pupils who joined the school with standards below the nationally expected Level 4 did not make enough progress. Pupils speak very favourably of improvements in the general quality of provision in mathematics. Classrooms have been refurbished to improve the learning environment. The linking of mathematics with ICT through the faculty structure has enabled greater use of computers to reinforce learning in class and provide challenging interactive approaches through web-based homework activities. Pupils' confidence has been boosted by confident and enthusiastic teaching in class, and by the many opportunities to take forward their learning outside the regular school day.

Standards in science have also shown some improvement, although this has yet to be as strong as in mathematics. The new subject leadership in science has, however, been very rigorous in identifying what needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching and learning through better planning and use of assessment. Pupils again comment very favourably on changes set in place in the science curriculum this year, noting how it has become more investigative and practical. The pupils respond well to these approaches in class. They generally collaborate well in group work and show confidence in setting out and testing hypotheses. The science curriculum has become increasingly personalised at Key Stage 4, with pupils now given the opportunity to study separate science subjects or applied science courses.

The use of assessment by teachers to show pupils how to improve has become more consistent. Teachers systematically incorporate 'tips' into their marking comments, which in most cases give good, subject-specific guidance on where to improve, and in the best examples are clearly linked to pupils' individual targets. Pupils generally have a good understanding of these targets. However, in a small minority of cases, teachers do not ensure that pupils have responded to the 'tips', and where this is the case work is poorly organised or incomplete. In mathematics, some excellent assessment by teachers as they circulate in class gives students instant feedback, identifies problems quickly, and helps pupils move forward with confidence. A good understanding of pupils' starting points through clear assessment is leading to some detailed planning of work to provide appropriately different levels of challenge to different groups of pupils. Effective grouping of pupils in class, taking account of their abilities, is also stimulating effective collaborative work between pupils in solving problems.

The nature and design of the school's buildings currently make it difficult to provide full access for people with disabilities. However, the school is engaged in long term

planning for new accommodation, and has made some shorter term improvements to handrails and ramps. No pupil currently on roll is deprived of access to the school's curriculum by limited access to its accommodation.

The quality of external support provided by the local education authority has been good. The school's own improvement plan has been tailored to incorporate the support identified in the local authority statement of action. The school and local authority have devised effective methods to respond to target support to those areas identified as priorities through monitoring and evaluation of the school's improvement. This has led, for example, to effective 'focus weeks', such as a week where consultants and advisors worked alongside teachers to model effective lessons in science.

The school's specialist sports status continues to be a real strength. The school is a very active place well before and after usual school hours, as high numbers of pupils participate in a wide range of activities on offer. Examination results in physical education and sports courses continue to be a strength. Teachers in the specialist subject have taken a leading role in the school's own programme of professional development to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Across the school, there has been a high degree of collaboration between teachers in sharing and supporting good teaching practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson  
Additional Inspector