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22 October 2008

Mr C Teal
The Headteacher
Kimberley Comprehensive School
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Dear Mr Teal

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 Wednesday 1 October, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I wish to extend my thanks to the senior managers, the chair of governors, teachers and students in both the main school and sixth form for sharing their views with me.

There have been no significant contextual changes in the school since its last inspection.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 17 January 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards in key stages 3 and 4 to enable students to achieve their potential
- ensure that all teaching is consistently good or better with more effective use of assessment information to match activities to needs
- ensure that in all subjects marking gives clear guidance on standards of students' work and how to improve it
- ensure leaders at all levels make certain that the school's strategies for raising achievement are consistently implemented in all subjects
- ensure the sixth form option choices are better matched to students' abilities to improve their progress and provide successful outcomes.

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 pupils' achievement.

Standards remain broadly average overall, as at the last inspection and students' achievement in both the school and the sixth form remains satisfactory. However, standards are gradually rising at both key stages with a higher proportion of students gaining Level 5 or higher at Key Stage 3 and a higher proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A* to C in Year 11. Although the proportion of students gaining 5 A* to C including maths and English increased from 36% to 44%, the school did not meet its modest targets for this group. Equally, the school missed its target for the proportion of students gaining the higher L6 or more at Key Stage 3. Nevertheless, progress against this issue is satisfactory because of the upward trend in standards and achievement as a result of improved teaching and leadership.

There have been satisfactory improvements in teaching and the use of assessment. Lesson plans now contain targets that match students' range of abilities and record both their prior attainment and the current levels they are working on. In part lessons seen, nearly all students knew their targets. Marking of work is more consistent and includes comments to help students improve their learning. Teachers are also beginning to annotate students' work with levels of attainment. In discussion, students confirmed that marking has improved, that teachers are now setting harder work and are helping them to make better progress.

The satisfactory improvement in school leadership, under the effective leadership of the headteacher, has resulted in the development of a stronger ethos for learning and achievement and much improved monitoring of provision at all levels. Standards are rising as a result of this work. Each member of the senior leadership team now meets regularly with a head of faculty to discuss and review developments within their subjects, focusing sharply on improvements against each area identified at the last inspection. This has led to the development of more effective self-evaluation within subjects, which feeds into whole school development. Individual governors are linked to each area for improvement. They monitor the progress the school is making, reporting to the whole governing body. However, the impact in English and mathematics has yet to be fully seen in improved performance and achievements of pupils.

Satisfactory progress has also been made to match sixth form choices to students' abilities. Students say they are now given clearer guidance when choosing their options. The head of sixth form or a senior leader meets with every student at the end of year 11 to discuss option choices reflecting their future aspirations. As a result, students' achievements are improving satisfactorily.

The school's specialist technology status impacts positively on learning. There is greater use of new technology to support teaching and learning, through for example the virtual learning environment (VLE). Closer links with businesses and the community have provided extended learning opportunities, such as bridge construction.

The local authority (LA) action plan is fit for purpose and has had a positive effect on the school's capacity to move forward and raise standards. The school improvement partner works closely and effectively with the school and has made a significant

impact in helping the school improve its assessment systems, the quality of teaching and school leadership.

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

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy

Additional Inspector