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Ms Ruth Martin
Acting Headteacher
The Royal Docks Community School
Prince Regent Lane
Custom House
London
E16 3HS

Dear Ms Martin

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 27 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 staff and students who met with me.

Ten teachers have joined the school since the last inspection and fewer posts are now being covered by temporary staff. The headteacher is currently absent and the school is being led by an acting headteacher.

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 27 February 2008, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards and improve students' achievements, especially in English in Years 10 and 11 and science.
- Improve the progress made by students by improving the quality of teaching so that lessons consistently have good pace and challenge and match students' abilities.
- Ensure that the good practice developed to improve students' literacy in Years 7 to 9 becomes standard practice in lessons throughout the school.
- Take actions to reduce the amount of lateness to school and the amount of unauthorised absence.

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 students' achievement.

There is some evidence that students who sat GCSE examinations in 2008 achieved more than those who sat them in 2007. The percentage of students attaining five or

more higher grades improved; the percentage gaining five or more higher grades including English and mathematics also increased slightly. There was a rise in the proportion of students attaining higher grade passes in science. However, students' overall achievement remained low, and examination results in English, which were particularly low in 2007, did not improve.

Teaching and learning have continued to improve. Around half of all lessons are good, and inadequate lessons are now rare. Much has been done to enable teachers to plan and deliver well-structured, varied and interesting lessons. As a result, lessons now move at a brisker pace. Much has also been done to help teachers make greater use of assessment in their teaching: they now check students' learning more carefully as the lesson progresses. More consistent teaching is helping students to make better progress in lessons. However, many lessons do not meet individual students' particular needs and abilities sufficiently closely.

Improvements in teaching are the result of rigorous lesson monitoring – this has rightly been the leaders' top priority. Monitoring has recently been developed to focus more sharply on provision within subjects. This is helping to make middle leaders more accountable for the work in their areas and is helping them to produce sharper plans for future improvement. The best teachers are also being used to support the development of teachers across the school.

A range of work is being undertaken to improve students' literacy skills. Much is still at an early stage, although strategies and approaches have been carefully considered and rigorously planned. High quality materials have been produced to support teachers' work in this area.

Attendance improved last year and was above the national average. Robust action has been taken to improve students' punctuality. Although some students still arrive after the bell, the problem has reduced considerably. The rate of unauthorised absence has risen, although this is largely due to the school's refusal to condone unjustified absence or lateness.

The school's leaders are working tirelessly to secure further improvement. They have a clear and realistic understanding of what has been achieved and what remains to be done. Their actions are carefully considered and thorough. The local authority's plan of action meets requirements and includes a range of supportive strategies. The plan's targets are sometimes rather vague, but a local authority task group meets regularly and monitors progress closely. The school is being provided with high quality support from a range of advisers and consultants.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Russell
H M Inspector