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Mr Gerard Batty  
Headteacher  
Hellesdon High School  
Middleton's Lane  
Norwich  
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NR6 5SB

Dear Mr Batty

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 2 July 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the students who shared their views with me and to the Chair of governors in giving up his time to meet with me.

There have been no significant changes in the school's context since its inspection

As a result of the inspection on 5–6 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- Raise achievement in the sixth form by ensuring that students are guided carefully towards the most appropriate courses for them, that senior managers monitor closely the progress made by students and, where necessary, they take early action to support those in danger of underachieving.
- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school by improving planning and monitoring the impact of teaching on students' learning.
- Improving the use of assessment in monitoring students' progress, so that they know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work in all subjects.
- Ensure all leaders and managers, including governors, engage in regular, thorough and rigorous self evaluation

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.

Standards, although steadily rising remain broadly average since the last inspection. By the time students leave in Year 11, their achievement is satisfactory overall and standards are broadly average. The proportion of students gaining 5 A\*–C GCSE grades, including mathematics and English is broadly average and the proportion gaining 5 A\*–C across all subjects is above average. Standards in the sixth form have moved from below average at the last inspection to broadly average as a result of effective monitoring, much improved assessment systems and more consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. The support and guidance given to students in selecting their options has improved so that only those who are capable of benefiting from option choices at AS level are offered a place. Progress against this area for improvement has been good.

There has been a steady rise in standards and achievement since the last inspection as a result of better use of assessment in setting more challenging targets and using the information in planning lessons. Although assessment has improved in all departments there are variations in the quality and consistency of its implementation, notably in English where students do not always know their targets or how to improve their work. Marking is more consistent in informing students how to improve, although it does not always indicate the progress they are making towards their targets and how they can achieve a higher grade. Progress against the area for improvement in assessment is satisfactory.

There has been satisfactory improvement in teaching and learning with more consistency in the use of information and communication technology, improved planning and the better matching of work to students' differing needs. However inconsistencies still remaining in matching different tasks, methods or resources to particular needs, in ensuring that support assistants are deployed effectively, and in using information and communication technology to promote learning

Satisfactory progress has been made in monitoring and self evaluation under the strong leadership of the headteacher. Regular joint monitoring by senior leaders with heads of department now takes place to ensure that judgements on the quality of teaching are measured against its impact on learning and progress, and that assessment for learning is used effectively. Other aspects of the consistency in the quality of teaching have not been monitored as systematically. There has been rigorous monitoring of the sixth form and governors have set up a separate sixth form committee. The governing body has also allocated two governors to monitor progress against each area for improvement. This has had a clear impact on raising standards and achievement.

The school's specialist status for technology has had a satisfactory impact on standards and achievement. There has been satisfactory improvement in raising standards in technology since the last inspection as a result, with more precise

target setting, tracking and monitoring. Standards in technology are now broadly average and achievement is satisfactory overall. Students are doing better in textiles and food technology than in resistant materials, graphics and electronics, although the gap is narrowing and the school is on course to meet most of its more challenging technology targets. The curriculum has improved as a result of technology status. Year 9 students now have opportunities for early entry into a short course technology GCSE subject. A new B.Tec course in Engineering has been introduced, and there are enrichment opportunities in other subjects such as music, physical education and history. It has also had a positive impact on the development of information and communication technology across the school through more use of interactive whiteboards and the introduction of wireless laptops.

The local authority action plan is fit for purpose and is having a positive impact on the school's capacity to improve and raise standards. The school improvement partner, who is also a senior local authority adviser, works effectively with the school and has made a significant impact in helping the school to improve achievement in the sixth form, to develop more consistent use of assessment, improve the quality of teaching and develop school self evaluation.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy  
Additional Inspector