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2 June 2009

Mr Paul Dick  
Trinity School  
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Dear Mr Dick

### Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 19 May 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also thank, on my behalf, the teachers whose lessons I visited and all of those who took time to speak to me, including senior staff, students and the representative from the local authority.

As a result of the inspection on 28 February 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise the aspirations of all students, with a focus on setting targets that are more challenging, mirroring the best practice
- ensure teaching and learning are consistently good, with a clear focus on managing and engaging all students
- raise the profile of the specialist school status.

Since the last inspection, the previous headteacher has resigned and you were appointed as executive headteacher in February 2009. The governing body has also been replaced by an interim executive board which is in the early stages of development.

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. The school also continues to meet the government's statutory requirements for safeguarding students.

Standards in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 remain below average, with students making satisfactory progress from their starting points. However, in 2008 the proportion of students achieving five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics fell below the government's floor target and the school was designated a 'national challenge' school. The school's assessment information and tracking show that students are now making better progress and suggest that there will be

improvements in the standards achieved in this year's GCSE examinations. It predicts that standards will exceed floor targets. This potential improvement results, in part, from significant focused work with Year 11. Standards in the sixth form continue to rise steadily. While there remains some variation between subjects, progress at both AS and A levels is good.

The school's target-setting process is currently under review. However, targets are now more challenging and this is beginning to have a positive impact on students' aspirations, as was evident in discussions with learners and through observation in lessons. The majority of students, when asked, are clear about their targets and know if they are on track to achieve them. Few, however, can explain what they need to do to improve their work or how they might achieve higher grades. Some higher-ability students also feel that the current tracking system is, at times, demotivating. The school is aware of this and wisely plans to move from the current system of minimum target grades to a more aspirational model which will raise expectations further for staff and students.

Senior leaders have rightly identified improvement of the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school as a priority. They have accurately recognised strengths and weakness in teaching both within and across subjects. In the past, high staff turnover and difficulties in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers have been problems. While these remain concerns, a number of key appointments have recently been made, and others are due to take effect in the near future. In addition, there has been a strong and successful focus on providing better training and development opportunities within the school to maximise the impact of existing staff.

As a result of these actions, students' engagement in lessons is improving and the number of good lessons is increasing steadily. In most lessons, students are enthusiastic and remain focused because planning ensures that the work is well matched to their needs and interests and there is a good balance between teacher-led and student-centred activities. In these lessons, routines are well established, expectations are high and the pace is good. Students are also given opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively and to make positive choices and take initiative in their learning. In a few lessons, students are less attentive and there is some low-level disruption, such as calling out. This is because routines are not so well established or are not reinforced. In some instances, work is insufficiently challenging and there are fewer planned opportunities for collaborative or independent work. Students are positive about behaviour in school but report that a persistent minority hamper their learning in some lessons. Overall, incidents of poor behaviour in lessons have reduced significantly because teaching is consistently better.

The school acknowledges readily that progress on raising the profile of the school's specialist status has been slow until now. This is reasonable, given the recent context of the school. There remains weak teaching in some specialist subjects and this is being addressed as a matter of urgency. Stronger leadership in this area, and

a clearer vision for what needs to be achieved, mean that actions are being implemented that should raise the profile of performing arts more rapidly within the school body and the wider community.

The local authority knows the school well and has a clear understanding of what it needs to do to improve. Its analysis of the position of the school is incisive. It provides good and well-targeted support which is welcomed by the school. The school is now managing the range of support more actively, so that actions are even more sharply focused and their impact can be monitored. There are strong and growing links with partner schools and the school improvement adviser makes appropriate evaluations.

The school is emerging from a turbulent period. Initially progress was slow but is now improving. Stronger leadership, a clearer vision that is shared by staff, and better whole-school systems are enabling the school to improve at a faster rate. Staff and students are positive about the school and the changes that have been made and there is justified confidence that recent improvements can be sustained in the future.

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

Christopher Wood  
Her Majesty's Inspector