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7 October 2009

Mrs J Hazeldine
Headteacher
Flixton Girls High School
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Dear Mrs Hazeldine

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 October, and for the information which you provided during my visit. In particular, I would like to thank those staff and students who gave up their time to talk to inspectors about their positive experiences at the school and the progress being made.

Since the last inspection a number of key appointments have been made at middle and senior management level. The profile of students joining the school in Year 7 is changing. There has been a slight increase in the number of students from minority ethnic groups and a higher proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. The number of students eligible for free school meals is now close to the national average.

As a result of the inspection in June 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve teaching and learning to ensure more consistent high quality
- improve development planning to manage the process of change more effectively
- establish more rigorous systems for monitoring the current provision and the impact of proposed changes
- ensure that a culture of mutual respect pervades the life of the school at all levels and that clear standards are set to improve behaviour.



Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements, and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

A diverse and more flexible curriculum as well as an improved profile of the quality of teaching has done much to enable students currently in Years 10 and 11 to make good progress and achieve well. These improvements have yet to bear fruit in terms of their full impact on examination results. Nevertheless, standards attained by students at Key Stage 4 have risen since the last inspection, but remain broadly average overall. Unvalidated results for 2009 indicate that the number of students gaining good GCSE results has continued a steady improvement. The school recognises there is work still to be done to improve GCSE results when English and mathematics are included. The increase in the proportion of A*/A grades in GCSE examinations taken in 2009 suggest that higher ability students are making better progress than in previous years. Data relating to students' progress are monitored closely by senior and middle managers to quality assure their reliability and to identify where progress is accelerating or where further intervention and support may be required. There remains some variation in the performance of different subjects and appropriate steps are being taken to address this.

Staff have worked hard to instil a stronger sense of self-belief and raise aspirations amongst the students. Thorough evaluation of individual needs and tailored support have been effective in re-engaging some of the most disaffected students. Consequently, attendance has improved considerably from 89% in 2007 to 92% in 2009. Strategies including detailed tracking, monitoring and analysis are well embedded and used consistently across departments. The school continues to work successfully with parents and carers to reduce rates of persistent absence. The improvement in behaviour is testimony to the students' increased commitment to their learning. They state that teachers are consistent in applying the new procedures for managing behaviour and appreciate that good behaviour benefits everyone in their learning. Fixed-term exclusions have also reduced as have the instances of students being sent out of class for poor behaviour. Only a very small minority of older girls continue to display inconsiderate behaviour around the school grounds.

The school has improved the quality of teaching so that it is increasingly good. The school's ethos of 'aspire, empower, excel' is evident in lessons where teachers plan so that all students can make at least good progress. Starter activities help students settle quickly into the lesson and promote a good climate for learning. Clear learning objectives are used well by teachers to check whether students are making progress or not. Teachers communicate their high expectations through the pace they set for their lesson and the challenge contained within classroom activities. There is a much stronger emphasis on students' enjoyment and involvement in lessons. Relationships are good and teachers maintain a firm grip; consequently, less time is spent on managing disruptive behaviour. In some cases there are missed opportunities at the end of lessons to consolidate and evaluate the learning that has taken place. Senior managers have established a robust and reliable system for monitoring teaching and



learning. This has resulted in a shared understanding of what constitutes best practice in teaching and learning. Students report that they experience more consistently good quality lessons than was the case in the past.

The school's development planning process is much improved. Planning includes clear and measurable criteria for improvement which are linked to students' outcomes. The governing body is increasingly aware of the need to challenge the school's leadership on the extent of progress against these criteria. The capacity of senior and middle management has been strengthened considerably. Middle managers are equipped with the skills and knowledge to interpret and use data for making decisions and evaluating the effectiveness of their departments. There is a common sense of purpose in the drive to raise standards and to move aspects of the school's work to at least good.

The school's specialist status has been re-energised by the appointment of a new senior manager. The management of this aspect of the school is dynamic and entrepreneurial. This has boosted both morale within the school and the school's reputation in the wider community. Students' involvement in sports and related activities has increased as has their enjoyment of being at school. The sport, physical education and dance department has taken a leading role in disseminating and sharing good practice in teaching and learning across the school. The school exceeded most of its specialist school targets in 2008. School data projecting students' results for 2010 indicate that changes to the sports curriculum will ensure that all targets are met, if not exceeded.

Support from the local authority and other external advisers has been very effective in helping the school move forward. Support is well targeted on where it will have the greatest impact on students' achievement. The school's progress in relation to its 'Raising Attainment Plan' will be scrutinised fortnightly by a panel of school managers and external advisers. The school's arrangements for safeguarding continue to meet government requirements.

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

Vincent Ashworth
Her Majesty's Inspector

