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Mr Glyn Hambling  
Cromer High School and Language College  
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Dear Mr Hambling

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 Thursday 24 September 2009 and for the information which you provided during my visit.

Since the inspection in January 2009 the senior leadership team has been strengthened by the promotion of three middle leaders to associate assistant headteachers. The school is receiving support from the local authority, the Gaining Ground programme and from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. Although a small number of staffing changes took place at the end of last term the school remains fully staffed. A check of the single central record and the school's safeguarding procedures by HMI confirmed that all arrangements are secure.

As a result of the inspection on 14–15 January 2009, the school was asked to:

- raise achievement and standards at Key Stage 4 by improving teaching and learning to provide greater challenge for students
- ensure that the identification and monitoring of actions for improvement is carried out effectively at all levels within the school
- improve attendance and persistent absence.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

The headteacher's clear agenda for improvement continues unabated and the early signs of improvement noted during the previous inspection have been consolidated. The impact of senior leaders, teachers and governors in raising students' aspirations and raising standards and achievement can be seen in a significant improvement in

GCSE examination results. The percentage of Year 11 students that attained 5 A\* to C grades including English and mathematics improved dramatically to 47% this year. This is above the school's own target and similar to the national average. The percentage of students attaining 5 A\* to C grades rose to 54% and 95% of them attained 5 A\* to G grades compared with 87% in the previous year. The proportion of students that attained A\* and A grades also increased in over half of all subjects. 8 students who sat vocational examinations at a local college attained a pass or a distinction.

These are significant improvements, but the school acknowledges that there is more to be done. Overall results remain below national averages. A raft of improvement strategies implemented to raise boys' achievement have led to some improvement in boys' performance. However, girls are benefiting from these strategies too; they continue to out-perform boys and the attainment gap between them has widened. The school's specialism in languages is having a positive impact in the local community but it does not play a role in leading school improvements. Although results have improved in Key Stage 3, standards in the three modern languages at the end of Key Stage 4 are well below average and provision is not good enough to meet its specialist targets.

Results have improved as a direct result of closer scrutiny and increased rigour in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work at all levels. Procedures to track students' progress and to target additional support for those at risk of underachieving are much more systematic and understood by all staff. A wealth of data in the school's 'blue book' provides senior staff with a clear picture of where strengths and weakness lie and what further intervention is needed. Aspirational targets are set to raise teachers' expectations, encourage students to aim high and eliminate any complacency. Subject leaders now evaluate the effectiveness of their departments and share their improvement plans with their line-managers on a regular basis.

Five lessons observed by HMI confirmed the school's own view that the overall quality of teaching and learning remains satisfactory, but is improving. Significant progress has been made in increasing the degree of challenge for students, in providing opportunities for them to work independently and in taking time to review learning and confirm students' understanding. Less progress has been made in setting students specific targets in all subjects. Marking is more regular but does not always refer to targets, require students to follow-up their errors or to complete work that is unfinished. HMI found that the majority of students make at least satisfactory progress in lessons, but during questioning and discussion a small minority of boys prefer to sit back and let others do the work for them, which limits their progress.

The school's relentless drive to improve attendance has led to a significant improvement, but further scope remains to encourage a small hard-core of students who are persistently absent, back into school. A new attendance policy and rigorous

monitoring by senior staff has led to the best attendance rates for the past five years. 92% of students have attended regularly for most of this year and so far this term, 95% of students have regularly attended. Persistent absence rates have fallen, but currently stand at 7.5% which is too high. Staff know these students well and the reasons for their persistent absence, but the wide range of actions to encourage them back into school has not yet been fully successful.

External support from the LA is satisfactory. Senior leaders value the input for local authority advisers and their help in brokering further external support. A project board led by the local authority meets regularly to monitor the school's progress. However, its statement of action has not been amended to include quantified targets to evaluate the effectiveness of its support in helping the school to deliver improvements.

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

John Mitcheson  
Her Majesty's Inspector.