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17 May 2010

Ms Liz Horrigan  
The Headteacher  
Harlington Community School  
Pinkwell Lane  
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Dear Ms Horrigan

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when we inspected your school on 11 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided during our visit. Could you please convey our thanks to the chair of governors, the local authority School Improvement Partner and the students who assisted us during the visit.

The acting headteacher was confirmed in the post of headteacher in April 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 20–21 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and achievement for all students by the end of Key Stage 4, particularly in mathematics
- improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently good or better so that all students make better progress
- improve the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects
- ensure that students receive good-quality guidance in Year 11 to enable them to follow appropriate courses in the sixth form.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made:

satisfactory progress in making improvements

and

satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

In 2009, students' attainment improved on the previous two years. The proportion of students who gained five or more good grades at GCSE improved significantly, although it remained below national expectations. Students' performance in English and mathematics showed a slight improvement but remained significantly below national averages. Girls attain better than boys. The school predicts further improvement in attainment in 2010, especially in the proportion of students set to gain five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C. Students' attainment in mathematics is set to reflect a modest improvement compared to 2009.

Since the last inspection, students have made significantly slower progress in their learning than could be expected. During this monitoring inspection, lessons observed by inspectors indicated that students generally make satisfactory progress in their learning. In many of these lessons, however, students were passive and they lacked opportunities to contribute to their learning. Teachers do not always provide suitable work that challenges students to do their best; in a few lessons this resulted in students becoming distracted and not completing their work. Inspectors did observe a good example of students working well in pairs to support each other's learning.

Students are firmly of the opinion that behaviour has improved over the last two years and that teachers are more supportive when they need help.

Teachers plan their lessons and are aware of the differing needs and abilities in their class. In the better lessons, the pace of students' learning was good and teachers used appropriate and varied learning activities that engaged students well. In these lessons, students contributed to their learning well and felt rewarded for their participation. However, in many lessons observed, students learned at a pedestrian pace. The school has made sound progress in ensuring that teachers now have access to students' achievement data. However, teachers are not always using data to support students who are underachieving or to plan for differing student needs in their lessons. Teachers' marking of work is inconsistent; some marked work seen did not give students any indication of what they needed to do to improve their performance.

Leaders have developed a good understanding that not all students are benefiting from the curriculum on offer. This has enabled staff to address weaknesses for a range of students. An improved range of vocational programmes is now on offer for students who have found it difficult to make appropriate progress following a more traditional curriculum. From September there will be a further range of options available, along with an accelerated Key Stage 3 curriculum for more able students. The focus of early intervention has enabled leaders to introduce many sound strategies to improve the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills

across subjects. Clear opportunities for students to make progress in literacy and numeracy are identified in teachers' lessons plans. Individual tuition and Saturday school support are now available. There are well-planned interventions for students who are underachieving in English and mathematics and these are contributing to improved student attainment. Most of the students targeted for this support are making improved progress.

A good range of strategies has been introduced to enhance the quality of careers and academic guidance given to students in Year 11. Individual interviews enabling students to be better informed of their post-16 choices based on their previous performance are now in place. Form time and assemblies are also used well to support the guidance process. As a result of these initiatives, student numbers in the sixth form have increased, students are making better progress in their learning, and more students are staying on their post-16 course.

Actions to address weak teaching have brought about some success but the school recognises that the pace of improvement needs to be accelerated. The priority is now to increase the proportion of good or better teaching. The headteacher knows the school well and has involved staff in the process of continual improvement. She has restructured the senior leadership team and this has resulted in clear roles and responsibilities for students' performance. The opportunities for middle managers to be seconded onto the senior leadership team are developing their skills well. The creation of new governing body committees will enable better scrutiny of the school's performance.

The local authority School Improvement Partner is challenging school leaders well. He is holding them to account for progress on key priorities of the school's improvement plan and this is supporting developments effectively.

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

Samantha Morgan-Price  
Her Majesty's Inspector