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Mr Graham Ridley and Mrs Gaynor Morgan
Headteacher and co-headteacher
Selly Oak Trust School
Oak Tree Lane
Selly Oak
Birmingham
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Dear Mr Ridley and Mrs Morgan

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Wednesday 16 June 2010, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information provided before and during my visit, the time you and your deputy gave to the discussions and to the joint observations of lessons during my visit.

Since October 2009 the headship of the school has been divided between the headteacher and the deputy headteacher who acts as co-headteacher for two days a week. The school is part of the re-organisation of special schools across Birmingham City.

As a result of the inspection on 8 and 9 July 2008, the school was asked to:

- use assessment in a more consistent and detailed way to improve achievement for all learners
- develop monitoring and evaluation so that they inform school improvement in a robust and rigorous manner
- embed good opportunities for developing functional literacy into cross-curriculum planning to improve students' skills.

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.

Achievement is good. The average points score of the higher attaining students achieving GCSE qualifications has improved from 115.8 in 2008 to 133.8 in 2009 and more students are attaining entry level qualifications. Lower attaining students with more complex needs are making good progress and many are now achieving



National Curriculum levels. Students continue to make outstanding progress in science. The school has identified lower achievement for girls at the higher levels and those who have English as an additional language in English and mathematics. The number of students gaining a qualification in the sixth form has increased and the range of qualifications taken has widened.

The school has developed a system for assessing and tracking students' progress, including testing on entry to provide accurate baseline information. The development of 'small steps' progress tracking for the lowest attaining students in different subjects is improving the quality of assessment and target setting. It has enabled staff to identify areas of underachievement and to intervene where required. However, not all the assessment that takes place in the classroom is accurate and no external moderation of Key Stage 3 work takes place. Although a wealth of data has been produced, there is still some way to go in collating, analysing and presenting this data in a consistent, useable form.

Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are improving and a new monitoring cycle has been introduced with a focus on lesson planning. However, the documentation used for lesson observations does not focus sufficiently well on the learning that is taking place, and uses an outmoded grading system. As a result, the evaluation of teaching is generous. Six lessons were observed, two of which were joint observations with the deputy headteacher. One lesson was outstanding, two were good and three were satisfactory. In the more effective lessons, the pace was brisk and students were engaged with active tasks accurately pitched at their level of ability. Less effective teaching did not engage students sufficiently well because tasks were not matched to ability levels and pace was too slow. There are new appointments pending for academic year heads which are intended to further strengthen and share monitoring and evaluation across the school.

Opportunities for students to develop functional literacy skills have been greatly improved. A focused and individualised programme targeting students' literacy and language needs is being piloted. The impact so far has been positive with improvements noted in reading and spelling ages. Staff have received training on literacy across the curriculum and, as a result, key words are being used successfully in lessons to extend students' vocabulary.

The school has been recommended for re-designation as a specialist science school and this continues to have a positive impact on provision. The school achieves its science targets and the practical teaching methods the science departments employs are spreading across the school. This is helping students to achieve better results in other subjects.

The school has made effective use of good support from the local authority on exclusions and the re-structuring of the governing body. The school has focused on improving in the areas indicated by the previous inspection and is certainly going in the right direction, despite a few remaining weaknesses. Leaders are embedding



ambition and drive and securing improvement soundly. Systems are being established which will enable the school to continue to improve.

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

Margaret Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector