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Mr P Hewitt
Headteacher
Little Lever School Specialist Language College
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Dear Mr Hewitt

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 9 June 2010 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please forward my thanks to your Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, the School Improvement Partner and the students for their help during the visit.

As a result of the inspection on 13-14 October 2009, the school was asked to:

- raise attainment in the core subjects of English and mathematics
- raise the quality of teaching and learning across the school through increasing opportunities for active learning
- make better use of assessment data to ensure that lessons are appropriately challenging for all students
- build capacity in the school through developing the skills of middle managers and making them more accountable.

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.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has embarked on streamlining the structure of the senior leadership team. Four assistant headteachers will have retired or left position by the end of the summer term and two new assistant headteachers, external appointments, will take up post by September 2010. A new head of English was appointed in January 2010, as was a new head of modern foreign languages and a new second in department. A new head of mathematics will start in September 2010.



Attainment in English and mathematics are improving. English coursework, already marked and moderated, shows an increase in grade C and above from 27% in 2009 to 55% in 2010. After much intensive support and targeted intervention analysis of school data indicates an increase in GCSE A* to C grades in English to 63%. Mathematics modules already marked demonstrate a significant increase in grade C and above to 55%. Intensive support and targeted strategies have raised current end-of-year forecasts for mathematics to 61% for grade C and above. Data indicate that the vast majority of subjects will record a higher A* to C profile with a current forecast pass rate for 5 GCSE A* to C of 77% compared to 61% in 2009. The development of BTEC courses to targeted groups of students has had an impact on improving outcomes. Work scrutinised during the monitoring visit was at least satisfactory and in some cases good.

School records show an increase since October of 8% in good or better teaching. Staff development is better focused on improving teaching skills and promoting active learning opportunities. For example, improved training for teachers in examination preparation and coursework is starting to have an impact on outcomes. Joint observations undertaken during the monitoring visit confirmed the school's accurate assessment of those lessons observed. The school recognises that there remains too much satisfactory teaching and that it has some way to go in disseminating the best practice across the curriculum so that every student is challenged to do their best and better.

Tracking and monitoring systems have improved as has the collection and analysis of data at senior and middle management levels to inform planning. There is effective use and sharing of data analysis to promote improvement. The targeting of and subsequent intervention plans for those students at risk of underachieving is beginning to have an impact on improved outcomes. The school recognises that there remains some variability in the use of data at classroom level to inform on assessment for learning and lesson planning.

The role of middle managers has been strengthened and they are now more accountable for running their departments and areas of responsibility. All six middle managers interviewed, including the heads of English and mathematics, welcomed the greater accountability as well as the enhancement of their roles within the school. The management and use of data by middle managers has improved, as has their involvement in the school self-evaluation processes.

External support for the school has been effective and significant. The local authority's statement of action and action plan has proved fit for purpose. Strong support from the local authority has strengthened and focused the improvement agenda. The secondment of an associate deputy headteacher from another school has been used highly effectively in establishing a new improved quality assurance framework. The School Improvement Partner has provided pertinent advice as well as timely and focused reports. A meeting of the Collaborative Working Group was



observed during the monitoring visit and provided sound evidence of the critical and supportive nature of external support.

Strong strategic leadership from the headteacher, ably supported by the two deputy headteachers, has been essential to the improvements achieved since the last inspection. Self-evaluation is accurate and highly realistic in appraising the need for further and sustained improvement. The specialism of modern foreign languages is due for re-designation in September 2010. The area continues its recovery from the setbacks experienced in the summer of 2009. Language classes for primary school pupils and evening classes continue to be offered and are popular.

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

Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector

