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Thursday 2 December 2010

Mr Colin Bateman
Headteacher
The International School and Community College, East Birmingham
Gressel Lane
Birmingham
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Dear Mr Bateman

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of The International School and Community College, East Birmingham

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when my colleague, Charlotte Evers, and I inspected your school on Wednesday 1 December 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I would also be grateful if you could pass on our thanks to the members of the governing body, staff and students who we met during our visit.

Plans for the rebuilding of the school under the Building Schools for the Future initiative are now well advanced and the school will move out of two of its main buildings at the end of this term to allow work to start in those areas of the school. This meant that, at the time of this visit, some subject areas were in the process of transferring their resources. In addition to the rebuilding, you will be retiring at the end of this term due to ill health. The deputy headteacher will take on the role of headteacher until a permanent appointment can be made. He has been fulfilling this role for several months due to your absence.

As a result of the inspection on 10 and 11 June 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. 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.

Exam results in 2009 and 2010 showed an improvement on previous years. In 2010, the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE rose to 84%, which is significantly above average while the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including in English and mathematics, rose to 24% and 41% in 2009 and 2010 respectively. Predictions based on the school's

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monitoring of students' progress and comparison with previous years show that the school is well placed to exceed these outcomes in 2011. This shows that since the previous inspection there has been a significant rise in students' achievement.

The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work have improved significantly since the inspection. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is increasingly the responsibility of subject leaders. They now monitor work in their subjects by a range of methods, such as work scrutiny, lesson observations and data analysis. This enables them to identify any areas of concern earlier than they were able to do previously. This has resulted in significant improvements in mathematics where the proportion of students who gain a grade C or higher has risen from 26% in 2008 to 49% in 2010 and in science where the proportion who gain two GCSEs in this area at grade C or above has risen from 37% to 80% in the same period. The monitoring of data is now robust and accurate as a result of strong partnership work between the school and the local authority. Led by the impressive senior leadership team, staff at all levels are now more skilled in analysing data and understanding how it can be used to promote better outcomes. A strong example is the work of the attendance team. Attendance is analysed in minute detail and the school has made links between higher attendance and higher achievement. This has resulted in attendance rising impressively since the previous visit. It is now a strength of the school at over 94% and rising.

Since the inspection, the curriculum at Key Stage 3 has improved. Because of the underperformance in mathematics previously, there is now an extra hour timetabled for all students in this key stage. This has allowed more emphasis on functional maths. However because of this determination to raise attainment in mathematics, there has been less focus on raising levels of numeracy in all subjects. To enhance the curriculum further, students are now entered for some GCSEs in Year 9, so they can start their Year 10 options earlier than before. This has ensured that the end of Key Stage 3 is used well, which is an improvement on the previous situation. In the sixth form, the curriculum has been reviewed and plans are at an advanced stage for the school to link with other post-16 provision in the Network East Schools Team (NEST). This will provide a significantly enhanced range of courses, as there will be five schools combining their resources to offer a range of vocational and academic options at Level 2 and Level 3. The school has interviewed Year 11 students and parents and is confident that this arrangement is sufficient to meet the aspirations and needs of all of its students who wish to continue in post-16 education.

The school has established stronger links and opened more channels of communication with parents. The parents' forum actively seeks the views of parents on how they can be more involved in supporting their children's learning. There is a range of initiatives, such as family learning, to enhance parents' literacy and numeracy skills so that they are better placed to support their children's studies. Links have been developed with local universities to encourage parents to join visits to raise their awareness of higher education opportunities. These activities are aimed

at raising aspirations for the school community and providing more information about types of pathways available for students.

The school's specialism performs well and progress is improving in all the specialist subjects. The school is using the strengths in the specialism to enhance the quality of the curriculum throughout the school. This has been evident in the increased use of information and communication technology, targeted interventions and systems to track students' progress and identify possible areas of underachievement. The local authority has provided much needed support for the school in developing staff skills, especially within the area of data analysis.

The developments show that the management of the school has good understanding of the school's context and knows what to do to improve it. However, it is early days and the full impact of these changes has yet to be seen in improved outcomes over time.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Muir
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in (insert month and year)

- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring monitoring and evaluation at all levels is focused on the learning and progress of all groups of students.
- Improve the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 so that it more effectively develops the key skills, particularly numeracy, that students need to succeed in the future.
- Develop effective strategies to further increase parental support for the school, particularly related to attendance and students' achievement of challenging targets.
- Develop a more appropriate curriculum for all sixth formers to improve achievement and the number of students that complete their courses.