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Mr C Dark  
Headteacher  
Matravers School  
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Dear Mr Dark

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Matravers School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Robert Smith, additional inspector, on 13 July 2011, for the time you gave to our `phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

Since the time the school was previously inspected, a new deputy headteacher has taken up post, an acting assistant headteacher has been appointed and changes have been made to the leadership of mathematics.

As a result of the inspection on 28–29 April 2010, 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

There was a dip in attainment at the end of Year 11 in 2010 in terms of average points scores, although the proportion of students attaining five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics continued to rise. This rise, although steady, has not in the past kept pace with the national trend. The school identified quickly the need to improve achievement and provision in English. Early examination entry was used well to identify areas of weakness in performance and these areas were effectively targeted by the department. The school's accurate and personalised tracking data indicate that the current Year 11 cohort is on track to meet challenging targets, not just in English but in the attainment of five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics. This is a significant improvement and is also sustainable,

as students in the current Years 9 and 10 are making better progress than previous cohorts at the same stage. Boys' performance is still lower than that of girls but the gap is narrowing. Students show positive attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. They enjoy collaborative work. They say that they find the now greater use of success criteria in lessons helpful in making it clear to them how they should improve. Students have a good knowledge of their targets.

The proportion of good lessons is steadily increasing and is promoting better gains in learning in lessons. Teachers plan lessons with achievable and precise outcomes in mind. These outcomes are also well matched to the needs of the students. Teachers make good, but not excessive, use of national curriculum levels to indicate to students how they can improve their work. Technology and other well-produced resources ensure learning activities are varied and maintain students' interest. In some lessons observed, imaginative group work was exploited particularly well by teachers to meet the range of needs of students in mixed ability classes. Teachers check on students' progress in lessons and give good verbal feedback to them. Written feedback in books gives areas for improvement but these comments are not always as frequent as they might be. All teachers are aware of the need for good pace and challenge in lessons, but where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, the pace is sometimes misjudged and not all students are challenged equally well.

The school has focused very well on improving the quality of teaching and learning. A rigorous and extensive programme of lesson observations was established for the start of the school year. Where teaching was judged to be satisfactory, individual teacher support plans with precise areas for development were set up. The effective use of visits to other institutions, involvement in learning communities in the school, peer-coaching and local authority support have had an impact on practice. Senior leaders are not complacent and are aware, however, of the need to maintain consistency and continue improvement. The overwhelming majority of lesson observations carried out during the monitoring inspection were conducted jointly by senior leaders and inspectors and there was a very high level of agreement on judgements. This reflects the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation.

A considerably changed curriculum at Key Stage 4 is to be implemented in September 2011. It is anticipated that this will give a greater variety of pathways and better opportunities for students to develop vocational as well as academic skills. Changes are also planned to the sixth form curriculum for the following year so that the choice better meets the needs of students entering post-16 education.

The school's expressive and performing arts specialism remains a strength of the school. Outcomes in the specialist subjects are good and the impact of the specialism is seen across the curriculum. A particularly significant contribution is to the transition programme offered to current Year 6 pupils as they enter the school. The opportunities for students to develop skills through the arts are being well received by pupils and future tutors.

Senior leaders have recognised the need to involve middle leaders more in the improvement planning process. The recent joint planning work has heightened the role of the middle leaders as well as accentuating their accountability. Middle leaders are responding positively to the sharper, and less diverse, nature of improvement targets and see the focus on a few key issues as a real step forward. The governing body provides rigorous challenge to the school to ensure that the pace of improvement remains consistent. Governors demonstrate high expectations of, and ambitions for, the school.

The school has received a high level of support from the local authority as part of the drive to improve teaching and learning. This support has been integrated well into the monitoring process and the school has made good use of this external perspective to moderate judgements.

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

Anne Looney  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2010**

- By July 2011, improve students' learning and progress so that they are good or better in at least 75% of lessons by ensuring that:
  - all teachers use information about students' targets and achievement when they plan their lessons to ensure that lesson activities match different students' targets and current attainment levels more closely
  - all teachers make full use of assessment techniques and strategies in their teaching to check, support and develop students' learning during the lesson
  - all teachers provide regular feedback to students that gives them a clear understanding of how to improve their work
  - leaders at all levels focus more sharply on the key priority of improving the quality of teaching and learning (both across the school and at the level of the individual teacher).
- Review and develop the curriculum (at Key Stages 4 and 5 in particular) to ensure that it meets students' needs, interests and aspirations more closely, enabling them to enjoy learning and achieve more.