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Mr Richard Brown  
Headteacher  
Hackney Free and Parochial Church of England Secondary School Specialist Sports  
College  
Paragon Road  
Hackney  
London  
E9 6NR

Dear Mr Brown

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Hackney Free and Parochial Church of England Secondary School Specialist Sports College**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

Since September 2008, major building work has been ongoing. An entire rebuild of the school started in June 2008 and is due for completion in September 2011. It is currently housed partly in a 1950s block, shortly to be demolished, and partly in phase one of the new building, which was completed in September 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 23 September 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

There has been steady improvement since 2008 in the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and mathematics. This pattern is set to continue into 2011, with well-founded predictions indicating a significant narrowing of the gap between the school's results and the national average. As attainment on entry to the school is below or well below average, these results are evidence of improving progress. The GCSE success rate, for example, for lower ability students in 2010 was significantly better than

expectations. The progress of more able students improved on previous years, a consequence of increased focus on their achievement.

Middle leaders are now a cohesive group. They are firmly committed to the school's 'Believe and Achieve' vision and demonstrate a collective determination to raise aspirations and achievement. They are clear about their role in school improvement and see themselves as fully accountable for results. They have a firmer grasp of assessment data than in the past and can accurately identify which groups require intervention and where there has been improvement as a result of targeted action. Their influence on school improvement is increasing, a change which they welcome and attribute to senior leadership which both supports and challenges them to drive up standards.

The impact of actions taken to address key areas for improvement was visible in most of the lessons seen, although it is not yet fully consistent or embedded across the school. Questioning to challenge and extend thinking is now specifically planned for; students respond well to the expectation that they should develop their answers accordingly. Not all marking is developmental or routinely linked to learning objectives, but it does now provide regular, encouraging and individualised feedback. Students generally know their targets and can explain what they need to do to improve, although this varies in precision and accuracy. Teachers know students as individuals and are planning more thoroughly to meet the needs of all. In the best lessons, objectives for learning are now sharply defined and explained carefully, enabling students to manage their own learning more effectively. Students' good behaviour and attitudes to learning help them to make the most of these opportunities for independence. However, this is not yet universal; where lessons remain satisfactory, it is often because they are too teacher-led.

A comprehensive programme is now in place to develop the financial awareness and employability of students. It includes enterprise days with employers from high profile businesses, as well as specific teaching about personal financial management. Year 10 students are trained to source and set up their own work experience placements and these are of a higher quality than in the past. Students rightly view this as evidence of the school's high aspirations for their successful futures.

The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of what the school needs to do to improve further. This is based on thorough, rigorous and regular analysis of the quality of learning and of performance data. Detailed information on the quality of teaching in each department is leading to targeted intervention and improvement. Innovative materials to exemplify and develop best practice have been developed with heads of department for implementation in September.

The sports specialism continues to provide an effective lead role in modelling good teaching and assessment. Imaginative links, such as with the London Boxing Academy, provide alternative learning experiences for the small minority of students

at risk of disaffection. The department is working alongside science teachers to develop an additional and complementary specialism.

The school has made highly effective use of partnerships and external support. The development of Advanced Skills Teachers mirrors the successful practice in an outstanding school with which Hackney Free has formed close and productive links. Education London has provided additional expertise to raise attainment in English and mathematics, now withdrawn as results have improved. The local authority monitors the school's progress closely, with intervention reducing as the pattern of sustained improvement becomes fully established and embedded.

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

Christine Raeside  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2009**

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better to accelerate students' progress by:
  - improving the quality of questioning, marking and information on how students can improve their work
  - having sharper lesson objectives
  - matching work more closely to students' ability and especially stretching the most able.
  
- Improve middle leadership to ensure consistently good practice across and within departments.
  
- Build on the good work in raising aspirations to provide more comprehensive education for economic well-being, including financial capability.