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21 March 2012

Mrs Elizabeth Dormor  
Headteacher  
Marshland High School  
School Road  
West Walton  
Wisbech  
PE14 7HA

Dear Mrs Dormor

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools with additional focus on behaviour:  
monitoring inspection of Marshland High School.**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Rosemary Litawski, additional inspector, on 20 March 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on our thanks to the students and governors who gave up their time to speak to us.

When the school was last inspected in September 2010, it was judged to no longer require significant improvement. You took up your post as headteacher at the start of the summer term in 2011.

As a result of the inspection on 22 September 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 inadequate progress in making improvements and the effectiveness of the school in improving students' behaviour is satisfactory.

**Achievement of pupils at the school**

The rapid improvement in attainment noted in the last inspection report has not been sustained. In 2011, fewer students gained at least five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. This was partly because attainment in English was well below average. The progress made by students over their five years in the school was well below expectations, especially for girls and for students with disabilities and those with special educational needs. On a more positive note, the proportion of A and A\* grades increased to match the national average and, if GCSE subjects only are considered, the school's performance was above the national average.

January 2012



Students currently in Year 11 are making better progress in English, but their overall progress remains below average and their attainment is low. This is partly because several students are not taking a full range of qualifications. The school's mainly academic curriculum includes few of the GCSE equivalent qualifications available. The progress of students with disabilities and those with special educational needs is monitored but the information is not shared widely enough to support their achievement.

In the best lessons seen during the inspection, students were presented with tasks and showed initiative in finding their own solutions. More typically, the pace of learning lacked urgency. Students followed instructions to complete tasks provided by the teacher but with limited understanding or insight. This was particularly evident in science lessons, where students could not explain in their own words the information they had copied into their books.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching was inadequate in five of the fourteen lessons observed during the inspection, although few of the school's strongest teachers were seen. Even so, the school's own monitoring suggests that teaching has improved only marginally compared to last year. Students said that some lessons are enjoyable and effective but others are weak, especially those where 'teachers talk all the time'. They raised valid concerns about inconsistencies in marking and homework.

Too few of the observed lessons were planned to give students of all abilities the opportunity to extend their learning fully. The deployment of teaching assistants was variable: one supported two students well to help them plan and make telephone calls; another had her time wasted by poor planning in an inadequate lesson.

The use of assessment to support students' learning is still underdeveloped. In the lessons seen, there were few examples of good questioning to explore or extend students' understanding. In mathematics lessons, teachers made time to check on students as they worked, and adapted their teaching accordingly. However, techniques to involve all students in learning were underused, such as giving students time to discuss their thoughts with a partner prior to whole-class discussion, or getting students to respond on mini-whiteboards. The quality of marking seen was good in English, satisfactory in mathematics and inadequate in science.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' behaviour is better than at the last inspection. School records show that serious disruption and disobedience have reduced markedly as a result of actions taken in the last year. Students agree: they understand the behaviour policy and the consequences of poor behaviour. Their behaviour around school and in lessons is

mostly calm and orderly, but their attitudes to learning are sometimes a little too relaxed. In observed lessons, students occasionally had to be reminded to focus on their work and two lessons were seriously disrupted by poor behaviour. Most students attend regularly. They feel safe in school and enjoy the opportunities they have to spend time with friends. However, persistent absence is above average for students with disabilities and those with special educational needs.

One tutorial session was observed during the inspection. There were some productive aspects, such as checking students' uniform and looking at the behaviour section of some students' log books. On the other hand, little learning took place during the tutor period and opportunities were missed to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### **The quality of leadership and management of the school**

When you took up your post as headteacher, the school lacked clear predictions for the 2011 examination results. The new system introduced to monitor Key Stage 4 attainment is an improvement and allows the school to evaluate the performance of different groups. The monitoring system for Key Stage 3 has been introduced but it is too early for its impact to be evident. The analysis of attendance and behaviour data has also improved, though information is not cross-referenced to attainment. Leaders do not know whether the school's value-added measures of progress are improving because the relevant analysis is not undertaken. The governing body is receiving more information than was the case last year, but this is still not enough to challenge leaders and managers effectively.

The school's regular programme of lesson observations is followed up where necessary with relevant professional development. Although school records show a reduction in inadequate lessons and an increase in the proportion of good and outstanding lessons, too much teaching is only satisfactory. School leaders feel they have had some success in improving the use of assessment to plan lessons and provide feedback to students. However, their action has not secured consistently effective practice.

The recent improvements in English are fragile. These have been achieved mainly by an intense focus on Year 11 students, who have been offered extra revision sessions, one-to-one support and small intervention groups. The impact of the whole-school literacy policy on lower year groups is not clear. The school's science specialism is having little discernable impact on the school.

In summary, the school is not in a position to evaluate itself with rigour. Despite a few improvements, monitoring and evaluation are still not consistent or coherent enough to support improvement planning or measure the impact made by initiatives. The school has made insufficient progress in demonstrating an increased capacity for further improvement.

The inspection has raised very serious concerns. These will be considered by the appropriate Regional Director, Inspection Delivery, who will decide when the school will next be inspected.

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

Stephen Abbott  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## Annex

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

- Raise attainment further for all groups of students including the proportion of highest grades, particularly but not exclusively, in English, for the more able, and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
  - ensuring that every lesson is carefully planned and implemented to give students of all abilities the opportunity to extend their learning fully
  - sharing more widely the best assessment and teaching practice that exists in the school
  - improving the consistency of students' behaviour in lessons and the way in which it is managed so that all students can make at least good progress in the time available.
  
- Ensure that the school evaluates with equal rigour all aspects of its work so that this provides a clear basis for improvement by:
  - using trend data more consistently to measure clearly the impact made by initiatives
  - providing more consistent and coherent monitoring and evaluation in key areas, such as its equalities promotion and specialist status
  - ensuring that the analysis and monitoring of different groups of students is undertaken in sufficient detail to aid targeted improvement planning.
  
- Improve the reporting to the governing body on the performance of students, particularly how well different groups are doing by:
  - providing frequent, summarised reports to the governing body which indicate headline information on all students' performance over time so that governors are in a better position to gain a clearer overview and challenge leaders and managers more effectively.