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14 November 2007

The Headteacher
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Dear Mr Dalziel

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 13 November with Christine Dick HMI. Thank you for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please give my thanks to the pupils, staff and governors who gave up their time to contribute to this visit.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 22 March 2007, the school was asked to: improve standards and pupils' achievement in Key Stage 4; raise expectations and improve the quality of learning in the majority of lessons; improve results in modern foreign languages at GCSE and Advanced Level and develop language college status more actively across the curriculum and finally to address the parental concerns about home-school communication and behaviour management in those lessons where learning is unsatisfactory.

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 pupils' achievement.

Positive steps have been taken on the behavioural issues raised in the inspection report. Pupils note that the new protocols and procedures introduced to address classroom disruption were effective and the pupils felt that teachers had more opportunity to teach.

The inspection of March 2007 asked the school to improve standards and pupils' achievement in Key Stage 4. However, the school regards the outcomes of the GCSE examinations as 'disappointing'. The 2007 results show the proportion of pupils achieving the five higher grade passes improved but remained below the national average. Similarly, the proportion obtaining five such passes that included English and mathematics improved from the previous year and is in line with the national figures. However, attainment on entry is above average and this is confirmed in the

very positive outcomes of the Year 9 statutory tests. Consequently, the 2007 Year 11 pupils failed to make satisfactory progress during their time in Key Stage 4.

The results of the significant numbers of pupils entered early for a GCSE in French, citizenship or religious education are more positive with an average higher level pass rate of 80%; these results will be published in 2008. The school has worked hard to develop an assessment data base and the initial outcomes provide a useful framework. It will be particularly important that all teaching and all senior management evaluations presented at the time of the next inspection are based on a robust and detailed analysis of achievement data.

The quality of learning has improved since the last inspection but the schools evaluations record that the proportion of effective learning and the best practice in teaching was lower in Key Stage 4 than might be expected. During this visit HMI conducted eight joint observations with senior staff and agreed with the major elements of the analysis offered by the school. However, five of the eight lessons were only satisfactory and this was because they were not developing the dynamic learning opportunities required to produce above average standards. HMI observed outstanding teaching in Year 11 mathematics and in Year 9 science.

The 2007 GCSE and advanced level results in modern foreign languages have improved, although the extension of progress from fast track GCSE to higher level courses remains an organisational issue for the school. It will be vital to the re-accreditation process for specialist college status that the school is able to demonstrate clearly the impact of the specialism on standards and achievement across the school.

Significant numbers of parents have attended various meetings since the inspection and evaluations of the views they expressed are positive. The school has commissioned a major commercial survey of parental views and this data will be available in time for the re-inspection in 2008. The school has commented positively on the support it has received from the local authority.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector