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Matthew Parr-Burman  
Marshland High School  
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Dear Mr Parr-Burman

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 25 November 2009 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to staff, students and governors.

There have been no significant changes to the school's context since the last inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 18-19 May 2009, the school was asked to:

- As a matter of urgency, improve safeguarding procedures by ensuring that adults receive training on child protection, and that policies and procedures meet statutory responsibilities.
- Improve the progress that all groups of students make and the standards they reach.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching
- Improve the rigour of the school's self-evaluation

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

The school has acted quickly and very effectively to improve safeguarding, which was judged to be inadequate at the last inspection. The governing body has improved its procedures for ensuring that it meets statutory requirements. Much training has been undertaken by governors. Compliance is checked through audit

and is reported on at governors' meetings. All staff have now received good training in child protection, together with updates. New staff are given an initial briefing followed by training at the earliest opportunity. The new child protection policy meets requirements well. Awareness of child protection issues has been successfully raised throughout the school. Procedures are clear, simple, and well advertised so that staff and students are clear about what they should do if they are concerned. Record keeping and the school's single central record are exemplary. The proportion of persistent absence has been reduced markedly from high levels in 2008 to well below national average, making a significant contribution to child protection. The school is now used as a model of good practice for other schools and frequently delivers training as a result. Progress against this area of improvement has been outstanding.

The school has made satisfactory progress to improve the progress of all groups of students and the standards they reach. Up until 2008, progress and standards were below national averages. Since then, many changes have been made which are beginning to have an impact. Tracking, monitoring and target setting have improved markedly, and students now have a much better idea of what they should do to improve. Communications with parents have improved, and include well attended sessions on how to help their children with learning. Aspirations of students are beginning to improve as a culture of learning becomes established, for example, through after school revision clubs. As a result of these changes, examination results improved markedly in 2009, reflecting improving progress. They remain broadly below national averages however, with significant differences between subjects. Early indications are of improved examination performance in 2010.

The school has made good progress to ensure that the proportion of good or better teaching improves. Many improvements have been made so that weaker teachers are better identified and supported. A systematic lesson observation system has been introduced and is now beginning to identify areas for professional development well. Early evidence indicates an improving proportion of good or better teaching and learning. The sharing of best practice is becoming more frequent, but could usefully be developed further between subjects. However, the lesson observations carried out by senior staff, as part of their monitoring of provision, focus too much on the teaching and not enough on the quality of students' learning. Students are becoming more involved in teaching as their views are discussed through the student learning council. Lesson planning is more systematic and has a greater emphasis on learning. Assessment and homework have improved and are now effectively monitored to ensure consistency. Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics and English are often missed.

The school has made good progress in improving the rigour of self evaluation. It now has a good view of its own strengths and weaknesses. Good departmental self evaluations are now undertaken systematically and are regularly updated as working tools for improvement. They inform the school's overall self evaluation well. Actions are well-considered and realistic, but are not as yet systematically monitored.

Targets are challenging but achievable, although the school did not meet its overall targets for GCSEs in 2009. The school's development plan is clear and succinct. Many initiatives are very recent and their full impact has yet to be seen however.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose. Since the last inspection good support has been provided. The school's improvement partner is also a local authority adviser. He has worked closely with the school to help ensure improvements in safeguarding, teaching and learning, assessment, and many other aspects of the school's provision. Specialist advisers have been used effectively in those subject areas where improvement has been needed. The school's specialist science status has had a satisfactory impact on achievement and standards, which remain broadly around national averages. Improvements in assessment and changes to the science curriculum have led to better setting arrangements and an expansion to include a greater choice and applied science. Links with feeder primary schools have been developed well, for example by having taster sessions when primary children come in to experience science.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath

Her Majesty's Inspector