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6 May 2011

Mrs Monica Cross
Principal
St Matthew Academy
St Joseph's Vale
Blackheath
London
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Dear Mrs Cross

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Matthew Academy

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your academy on 5 May 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the students and to the Chair of the Governing Body, who gave up their time to speak to me.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a sharp increase in the number on roll in the primary phase and the proportion of these pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has doubled. The academy has also restructured its subject faculties, reducing the number from seven to five.

As a result of the inspection on 3 February 2010, the academy 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 academy has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Following the previous inspection, students' attainment rose significantly in 2010, although it remained below the national average for those achieving five or more good GCSE grades both with and without English and mathematics, at 43% and 67% respectively. From their very low starting points, students made progress that was broadly in line with the national average. Current data indicate that attainment is set to rise slightly in 2011 and more significantly in 2012. The use of more refined systems to track students' progress at Key Stage 4 is starting to raise achievement. Similar systems are being established to secure higher attainment in Key Stage 2,

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but it is too early to assess their impact. Intervention strategies across all key stages provide carefully targeted support and guidance.

Many students are aware of their current levels of attainment and some can identify successfully how to move up to the next level. The quality of written feedback in students' books is improving and some very good examples were seen, although it does not always help to improve the quality of their work. Regular meetings between leaders and managers to discuss faculty performance and students' progress towards their targets secure accountability and drive forward school improvement.

The lessons observed during this visit reflected a steadily increasing proportion of good teaching. As a result, the development of students' literacy skills has improved. Behaviour was consistently good and the academy's 'behaviour for learning' policy was implemented effectively by the overwhelming majority of staff. The work done through restorative justice is proving effective. Senior leaders make accurate judgements when observing lessons. Where lessons were satisfactory rather than good or better, the pace was not sufficiently challenging and students shared one common task regardless of their ability levels. Senior and middle leaders are tackling satisfactory teaching through a series of formal and informal lesson observations and a comprehensive professional development programme.

The principal's vision for the academy is shared by the staff, who demonstrate great commitment towards seeking school improvement. Senior leaders have clear roles and responsibilities and the culture of monitoring is well embedded. Middle leaders feel empowered and produce accurate self-evaluation documentation which is reviewed on a regular basis. The academy's improvement plan identifies key priorities with measurable success criteria. The governing body has been proactive in responding to the issues raised in the previous inspection report.

The academy's specialist subjects are making a positive contribution towards improving students' outcomes, and they benefit greatly from participating in enterprise activities which increase self-confidence and boost self-esteem. The three Enterprise Weeks staged during the year enable students to develop their entrepreneurial skills and encourage them to aim high.

The academy receives good support from the School Improvement Partner, who has helped it to identify areas for improvement through her analysis of documentation and by monitoring, in particular, the quality of teaching and learning.

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

John Daniell

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Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to good by ensuring that:
 - lessons move at a sufficient pace
 - teachers make effective use of 100-minute lessons
 - students understand what they are expected to learn and to be able to do during lessons
 - lesson activities interest and challenge students of all abilities
 - marking consistently provides clear and helpful guidance to students about how to improve
 - lessons in all subjects provide sufficient support for the development of students' literacy skills.

- Ensure that all staff apply the academy's new 'behaviour for learning' policy consistently.