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9 December 2015

Ms J Tinsley  
Headteacher  
Holly Lodge Girls' College  
140 Mill Lane  
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Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L12 7LE

Dear Ms Tinsley

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holly Lodge Girls' College**

Following my visit to your school on 1 December 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school. The school should take further action to:

- further strengthen its action plan to ensure that all actions have readily measurable targets in order to focus more sharply on previously underachieving groups of pupils and individuals and
- ensure that senior leaders' analysis of pupils' performance provides a clear view of the impact of the schools' actions on the progress of all pupils.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, as headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the

local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the suite of documents that make up the school's improvement and post-inspection action plans. I also analysed and discussed the school's self-evaluation summary. I scrutinised a range of other documentation related to the school's work. These included the outcomes of senior leaders' activities to check the quality of teaching and learning, and the impact of the school's arrangements for performance management. I discussed with you and your deputy headteacher the results of the 2015 GCSE examinations and current information on pupils in all year groups. I checked the single central record and found it to meet requirements. I also made brief visits to a number of classrooms to observe the quality of pupils' behaviour and the teaching and learning taking place.

## **Context**

One new teacher has joined the school and 12 teachers have left their posts since the last inspection.

## **Main findings**

You, senior leaders and governors have set a clear direction for the school's improvement. Middle leaders understand their roles and responsibilities in improving the school. They know what they need to do in order to improve their practice and that of their teams. The school's development planning and post-inspection plan are fit for the purpose of driving the school forward at an appropriate pace. This shows the school's capacity to tackle the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Some targets need to be sharpened still further, with clearer measures of success. This is to ensure that groups of pupils, notably those supported by the pupil premium funding and the most-able pupils, make the fastest progress they can. The pupil premium provides additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.

Systems for checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and performance management are very rigorous. The school has already taken some robust steps since the previous inspection to improve teaching further. Senior and middle leaders show clear understanding of the characteristics of teaching and learning needed to ensure that the school becomes good.

In particular, good-quality training for middle leaders in assessing the quality of teaching in their teams has been very effective. Feedback to teachers through learning walks and performance management is clear, helpful and consistent. Where weaknesses in teaching are identified, appropriate and specific professional development is quickly put in place. Weekly timetabled meetings for staff allow them to work together on the school's priorities of challenge, questioning and matching work to pupils' needs. Teachers are eager to try new approaches and share the existing good practice already in the school.

It is as yet too early to see the full impact of the school's actions on pupils' outcomes, but you and senior leaders have wisely introduced new assessment systems at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 to ensure that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are higher.

As a principle, you continue to operate early and multiple entry in some GCSE subjects. You also provide courses that you believe to be best matched to the needs of pupils for whom GCSE subjects would be unsuitable. Results from some of these courses do not count in national assessment information. You are aware that this affects the analysis of your pupils' progress compared to others nationally. You and senior leaders know that further work is needed to provide a clearer view of the impact of your actions on the progress of all pupils.

Based on national information, pupils reached standards in English and mathematics in 2015 that were similar to outcomes in 2014 and therefore well below average. Pupils improved their progress, although still well below average, in their best eight GCSE subjects.

Most disadvantaged pupils are narrowing the gaps in their progress in English and mathematics at a faster rate than other pupils in the school. You recognise that there is still much work to be done to ensure that disadvantaged pupils of middle and high ability achieve as well as they can and that performance in science swiftly improves for all pupils. The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly in line with that of other pupils in the school and nationally. Predictions for outcomes in 2016 point to further improvements.

Sixth form learners are maintaining the good progress noted in the previous inspection, especially in vocational subjects, but progress in academic courses continues to be area for development.

Governors are in the process of carrying out a review of their practice, well supported by the local authority. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and are committed to the school's improvement, and their own impact upon it. Governors are now able to ask more challenging questions of senior and middle leaders, having undergone an audit of their skills and a reconstruction of the governing body to make their work more effective.

The school provides a calm and supportive place where pupils feel safe and relationships are strong. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school during the inspection was impressive. Pupils are courteous and visibly enjoy their learning. Their attendance is improving, through your very thorough tracking systems, and is currently above average.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school has a very positive relationship with the local authority. School improvement staff have been quick to organise effective support and training for the school's improvement; for example, governor training. The local authority has also supported a review of pupil premium expenditure and subject and leadership training for middle leaders. As a result they show strong capacity to challenge underperformance in their departments.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and Director of Children's Services for Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing

**Her Majesty's Inspector**