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14 May 2015

Ms Helen Anthony  
Fortismere School  
Southwing  
Tetherdown  
Muswell Hill  
London, N10 1NE

Dear Ms Anthony

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Fortismere School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 May 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The inspection also focused on relevant aspects of the quality of leadership and management, including governance, at the school.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you, two governors (the Chairs of the Curriculum and Finance committees) and two middle and two senior leaders to discuss actions taken to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students. I spoke with the school improvement officer from the local authority on the telephone. Two senior leaders accompanied me on a short tour of the school, during which we made brief visits to lessons. I spoke with a group of students and examined samples of their work. I evaluated the school's internal performance information, minutes of governing body meetings, and the school's strategic and improvement plans. I examined a number of case files concerning disadvantaged students.

## Context

Fortismere School is a larger than average secondary school with a sixth form. Most students join the school with above average attainment and leave with higher than average examination results. Just under half of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is much lower than the national average. However, of those, a large proportion have statements of special educational need, primarily for autistic spectrum disorders. The proportion of students eligible for pupil premium funding, which is additional government funding for disadvantaged students, is below average. Since the last inspection, larger numbers of students have joined the school outside the normal September admission dates and through the local 'managed moves' and 'fair access' arrangements. Many of these students enter the school into Years 10 and 11.

## Main Findings

The gap between the GCSE performance of disadvantaged students and other students was significant in 2012. In that year, the gap in achievement for those gaining five GCSE grades A\* to C between disadvantaged students and others was 46%. In 2013, this difference narrowed significantly to 28%, but then widened again in 2014 to 46%. Given the school's very strong GCSE performance in this measure for non-disadvantaged students, the achievement of disadvantaged students has been too low over time.

In light of this pattern of underachievement, governors and senior leaders have comprehensively reviewed all aspects of the school's work with disadvantaged students. Leaders had forecast this poorer 2014 performance and had already begun planning remedial action. Leaders have re-visited the budget allocations for the pupil premium grant, ensuring that there is a much clearer focus on the impact that the money has on the progress being made by less advantaged students. This has made a difference. For example, the school's internal performance information shows clear improvement in the achievement of lower and middle ability disadvantaged students in mathematics and English. This is the result of the decision to spend some of the grant on smaller group sizes in lower and middle ability mathematics and English sets. The monitoring of disadvantaged students' performance is sharper and more coherent. Students are tracked very closely in most subjects and the leaders for English and mathematics are more consistent in their approaches to this aspect.

Senior and middle leaders are using systems for tracking student performance more forensically. If the progress of an individual student becomes a concern, weekly 'team around the child' meetings take place to ensure that all is being done to get the young person back on track. These weekly meetings are vital and detailed interventions are planned in them. The available strategies are comprehensive and case studies evidence their impact. This is exemplified in a number of cases where students' attendance patterns are being improved through the skilled work of the

school's inclusion staff. Here, the work of the home-school liaison officer and her team in engaging with young people and their families is pivotal. The impact of such intervention is clear in the rapidly closing gap between the attendance rates of disadvantaged students and their advantaged peers. However, information concerning attendance expectations lacks clarity, including, for example, a sharper focus on the school's stated expectation of a minimum attendance rate for all students of at least 97%.

There is a similarly positive record in relation to the exclusion of disadvantaged students. Over the last three years, the school's strong focus on reinforcing good or better behaviour has resulted in the number of fixed term exclusions for students declining steadily. This was not, however, the case with disadvantaged students, where the number of fixed term exclusions has gradually risen. The detrimental impact of such increases on the academic performance of disadvantaged students was significant.

In light of such patterns, leaders have taken decisive action. The school's inclusion centre has been re-located to the middle of the campus – a clear statement of the school's commitment to inclusion. A newly appointed, highly skilled inclusion leader works more effectively with a wide range of high quality support agencies to ensure comprehensive support for vulnerable students. The new inclusion leader and other senior colleagues also manage very effective compulsory and frequent whole-staff training in inclusion. This proactivity has resulted in dramatically reduced rates of exclusion for disadvantaged students. Leaders agree, however, that the impact of the re-admission meetings which follow exclusion requires improvement.

### **External support**

The school is making increasingly effective use of high quality external support.

The support of the local authority school improvement officer has been effective in brokering a partnership with two neighbouring schools. These schools are working more successfully with their disadvantaged populations and Fortismere leaders have used these partnerships effectively in reviewing their own practice.

Of greater impact is the school's work with its neighbouring teaching and learning forum, the National College for Teaching and Leadership, and with a local teaching school alliance. Through these partnerships, a steady revolution is taking place in the school as staff deepen and widen their teaching and inclusion skills. The impact of such partnership is clear in the improved projected outcomes for Fortismere's disadvantaged students, evidenced clearly in the school's performance information and students' work. Similarly, the services provided to disadvantaged students and their families through the 'LINC' inclusion centre are of increasing range and quality.

**The strengths in the school's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged pupils effectively to achieve their potential are:**

- Tracking and monitoring systems have been enhanced through more effective, swift interventions following performance reviews of students and staff.
- Governors have a very clear understanding of the performance of disadvantaged students. They hold senior and middle leaders to account in this regard with increasing expertise.
- The growth in the range of services provided by the school's inclusion team is rapidly improving attendance and exclusion rates for disadvantaged students.

**The weaknesses in the school's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged pupils effectively to achieve their potential are:**

- The management of attendance and exclusion data is not as effective as the management of students' performance information.

**Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure the new attendance management policy sets out precisely the school's expectations and that they are clearly articulated for parents and students
- Improve support and challenge for excluded students and their families through more tightly planned intervention and review following re-admission meetings
- Check that marking, assessment and review are carried out according to the school's published expectations.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Director of Children's Services for Haringey and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Debbie Clinton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**