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Mr Worthington
Headteacher
Queensbury School
Deanstones Lane
Queensbury
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West Yorkshire
BD13 2AS

Dear Mr Worthington

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Queensbury School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with additional inspector, Derek Barnes, on 2 December 2011. I appreciate the time you gave to meet me on 1 December and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the students who gave their time to share their views with us.

Since the last inspection, the number of students on roll has decreased and this has resulted in a reduction in staffing. There has been an increase in the proportion of students speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals has also increased.

As a result of the inspection on 20 September 2010, the school 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 school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The headteacher and other senior leaders are developing sound foundations for sustainable progress by focusing on improving the quality of teaching and learning through a comprehensive professional development programme. There have also been changes to the curriculum to meet the needs and interests of students. In addition, attendance has continued to rise. These have all contributed to attainment rising at Key Stage 4 since the last inspection. School data indicate that results for five A* to C grades at GCSE improved significantly to 91% in 2011, which is well above the national average. There has also been a continued rising trend in the proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades including English and mathematics. This rose by five percentage points to 49%. While this remains below the national average, the gap with the national average is narrowing. A significant

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increase in the percentage of students achieving A* to C grades in mathematics contributed to this.

The percentage of boys gaining five A* to C grades rose significantly in 2011 and the percentage gaining five A* to C, including English and mathematics also rose to 45%. The school has put in place a range of initiatives, for example, coaching; targeted interventions, such as additional support from a higher level teaching assistant and increased use of new technologies, such as camcorders or 'flip cams' to help engage students and raise attainment. These initiatives, in conjunction with improvements to the quality of the teaching and learning, are having an impact. The attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE rose significantly since the last inspection to well above the average for the group nationally but the proportion achieving five A* to C grades including English and mathematics dipped. The school has an effective system for tracking the progress of students and uses this well to target interventions where there are variations in achievement. School predictions based on the effective tracking system indicate that the attainment of both boys and those known to be eligible for free school meals will improve in 2012.

The school's senior leaders are not complacent and recognise that the rate of progress, particularly in English and mathematics and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, needs to accelerate further. The effective programme of professional development for staff and middle leaders is a strength of the school. This, coupled with the thorough quality assurance systems, is having an impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The inspection team undertook learning walks and observed 19 part lessons. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, but there remains some inconsistency. In the lessons observed, most students' behaviour and attitudes to their learning were positive. They were keen to learn and participate.

There has been a greater focus on independent and group learning tasks. In the best lessons seen, students' learning was enhanced through group work that involved challenge, peer debate and assessment. In these lessons, teachers used questioning well to draw students on in their learning and included demands for extended answers. Teachers' use of data to plan lessons has moved on. Data are generally used well to plan learning activities and differentiated learning objectives. In one lesson observed, a teacher used prior attainment data to plan a starter activity which refined the assessment of students' capabilities. This led to students attempting differentiated learning objectives completely clear on what they were learning, why they were doing them and how to get better. Another example of good practice was seen in a mathematics lesson. Students were using the iPod to read codes enabling them to solve quadratic problems which challenged all abilities. The planning and provision were differentiated extremely well. In most lessons, students were very clear as to the level at which they were working but in some cases they were less clear exactly how to move on. Learning was less effective and the pace of learning slowed when students provided short answers and teachers did not probe further to help them develop their understanding. There was limited evidence of students working

independently of the teacher. Learning was also less effective in lessons where tasks were not made clear or the learning activities were allowed to progress slowly.

Senior leaders know the strengths of the school, have generally identified the areas for improvement accurately and have drawn effectively on external support through the Bradford Partnership to quality assure their own judgements. The appointment of a parent engagement officer in September 2011 and the initiatives put in place the previous year have already had an impact on developing communication and the engagement of parents and carers in their children's learning, for example, through the establishment of a parents' forum; the use of text messages; and the parental e-portal. A large number of parents and carers responded to a school questionnaire in October 2011 and a high percentage indicated greater satisfaction with the school's work to help them support their children's learning and greater satisfaction with the information they receive about their children's progress.

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

Linda Tetik
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- To raise attainment at Key Stage 4 so that outcomes for five GCSE at A* to C, including English and mathematics, exceed the national average by 2012 through:
 - improving the attainment of boys
 - improving the attainment and progress made by students known to be eligible for free school meals so that they match the school average.

- Improve the proportion of good teaching and learning by:
 - promoting a greater focus on independent and group learning skills
 - ensuring that questioning is used effectively to challenge individual students according to their needs
 - the consistent and effective use of data in lesson planning.

- Engage parents and carers more as active participants in their children's learning.