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The Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Porter

## **SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF WESTFIELD SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Christine Harrison, Judith Tolley, Bernard Treacy and Derek Aitken, Additional Inspectors to your school on 10 and 11 October 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was found to have serious weaknesses in February 2005.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of receipt of this letter.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle managers, groups of pupils, the chair and other members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

### **Context**

There has been some disruption to staffing in several key areas. The school has struggled to attract enough high quality teachers. The LA has allowed the school an agreed overspend to help fund some of the major problems with the current accommodation. However, the school is due for rebuild in 2007.

### **Achievement and standards**

The February 2005 inspection report required the school to raise the overall level of achievement and especially that of higher attaining pupils. The school's test and examination results for 2005 show little change from those for 2004. Pupils' standards at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11 remain below average. The areas of underachievement, identified in the inspection report, persist. In particular, higher attainers still do not do as well as they should and the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades A\* to C in GCSE examinations was lower in most subjects in 2005 than it was in 2004.

Higher attaining pupils make good progress in lessons when they are suitably challenged; for example in a geography lesson, they were fully engaged by interesting and demanding group work. However, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science there are too many lessons where these pupils do not make enough progress. This is usually because teachers do not expect enough from pupils and occasionally because the instructions teachers give are not clear.

Unsatisfactory achievement in English and mathematics was an area of concern in the inspection report. In addition, the school rightly identified weaknesses in science, so that all three core subjects became a focus for improvement. There has been some progress, particularly in improving schemes of work. However, evidence from lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work shows that the various innovations have yet to produce any significant improvement in pupils' achievement in these subjects.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2005:

- Raise the overall level of achievement (and especially that of high ability pupils). – inadequate progress

### **Personal development and well-being**

As a result of the policies and procedures which the school has introduced, attitudes and behaviour have improved. Teachers, with the support of senior management, are adopting a more consistent approach towards behaviour and punctuality in and around classrooms. Pupils have noted this, and in the main have responded positively, as they see sanctions more consistently and fairly applied. The instances of disruptive behaviour are now more localised and largely linked to inadequate teaching and inspectors agree with the pupils' views that 'there is less messing about in lessons now'. Pupils are showing a more cooperative attitude as they now have an increased voice in school affairs and more incentives to behave responsibly. They enjoy their education more because the learning environment is better. Work remains to be done to tackle the reasons for the uneven levels of attendance, especially in Year 10 and the high, albeit decreasing number of exclusions. Similarly, it is necessary to raise pupils' self-esteem and oral skills in lessons and form time, to enhance their personal development

More pupils show a sense of urgency in crossing the broad site and getting to assembly in time. However, too many pupils still dawdle en route, which delays the

timely start of some lessons. The more conspicuous presence of senior managers has been effective in improving punctuality to lessons and afternoon registration.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2005:

- Improve the unacceptable attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils – good progress
- Improve the unacceptable levels of poor punctuality to school and lessons – good progress

## **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching is broadly similar to that noted in the February 2005 inspection. The school has put systems in place to remove the weaknesses in teaching in the areas identified in the last report, but progress has been too slow. There remain general inconsistencies and significant weaknesses in English, mathematics, science, art and music. There are pockets of outstanding practice but this is not being shared effectively enough across the school and the quality of teaching therefore varies considerably both across and within departments. One Year 11 pupil summed this up by saying 'It depends on which teacher you have'.

In the best lessons, teachers use starter activities well to recap and reinforce previous learning, objectives are shared with pupils and plenaries are used effectively to consolidate the main points at the end of lessons. Pupils respond well to this structured learning but it is not consistent across the school. A Year 11 pupil stated, 'If everyone knows what they're doing, it's better; we need a routine.' Pupils build successfully on what has gone before when information is presented confidently and steps in learning are well sequenced. However, teachers do not always use assessment information effectively to plan for the progress of groups of differing ability in lessons; this leads to some pupils finding tasks too easy or too difficult and not achieving as well as they should. Pupils make the best progress when they are required to work collaboratively to explore issues and find solutions for themselves. When this was seen in history and geography, for example, the progress of pupils was stunning. However in too many lessons the above strengths are missing. Teachers talk too much and fail to keep the pupils interested because too much time is spent managing poor behaviour, rather than ensuring pupils are learning.

Since the previous inspection the school has kept the curriculum under review and progress has been satisfactory. Schemes of work have been reviewed but their impact upon the quality of teaching and learning has not yet been fully monitored and evaluated. It remains the case that pupils in Year 11 do not study religious education (RE), though the school has rectified the situation for the current Year 10 pupils.

Overall the satisfactory provision for the care and welfare of pupils has been maintained. The physical environment is better maintained and teachers have worked with pupils to make the interior display more attractive. Pupils are pleased

that the toilets have been much improved. Fire drill practices however are too infrequent and some minor health and safety issues remain in science lessons. The school is consulting pupils more and giving them a larger say in school affairs.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2005:

- Remove the weaknesses in teaching – inadequate progress
- Bring provision in English, mathematics, art and music up to at least a satisfactory level – inadequate progress
- Provide religious education for Year 11 pupils in order to meet statutory requirements – inadequate progress

## **Leadership and management**

The school's action plan identifies the main areas for improvement but has not yet had sufficient impact on removing the causes of the weaknesses. Good progress has been made in dealing with behaviour. Managers have also improved the learning environment dealing effectively with issues of litter, graffiti and poor toilet facilities. However, there are still significant problems with the management of several key subjects such as English, mathematics, science, music and art. The range of planned actions is generally appropriate but not enough emphasis is placed on pupils' day-to-day learning in lessons.

The 'Westfield Quality Assurance Programme' has improved. Monitoring of teaching and learning by senior managers is providing a more accurate view of the quality of teaching but is still painting a rosier picture than that found by the inspectors. Monitoring of teaching has the right emphasis on learning but is generally too positive. The action taken has not been swift or focused enough to weed out the main problems within several departments. Middle managers are not sufficiently involved in the process and the quality and frequency of their monitoring is inconsistent. The skills and practice of effective self-evaluation are not yet fully established at whole school level, although this is now growing within departments.

The contribution of the governing body to the school's improvement has been satisfactory. Governors have made good progress towards providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils but still fail to meet statutory requirements. Governors now visit the school to gain first hand evidence of progress. They are beginning to ask probing questions and have taken on a more evaluative approach in their monitoring of the work of the school. However, they have a weak understanding of how well the school is performing because they do not have sufficient access to clear information on important aspects of its operations such as the quality of teaching and relevant performance data. They are keen to ensure the school makes rapid progress out of the category of serious weaknesses. Overall, governors and senior managers show satisfactory capacity for improving the school.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2005:

- Produce an acceptable learning environment up to the building closure – good progress
- Ensure that management focuses relentlessly on the issues identified in the inspection report – satisfactory progress
- Provide a daily act of collective worship - inadequate progress

### **External support**

The LA statement of action is satisfactory overall. The plan shows important areas for improvement and contains clear targets and accountability. There has been good curriculum support provided to the school. Records of LA visits indicate a clear focus on key areas for improvement and much of the analysis is effective but rather woolly in places. Tough judgements have not always been made and the language used has not always been sufficiently robust. However, accurate and rigorous reviews of the core subjects have taken place in cooperation with the senior managers. The LA has been less successful in supporting the school's development of art and music and on advising it about the new procedures for monitoring visits.

### **Main Judgements**

The school has made satisfactory progress in removing the causes of its serious weaknesses. This visit has raised some concerns about the standard of education provided and the school's performance will be monitored.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve pupils' learning in English, science, mathematics music and art.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of middle managers particularly in the three core subjects.
- Ensure governors and senior managers do more to translate ideas into action so that all pupils achieve as well as they should

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Sheffield.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Briggs  
**Additional Inspector**