

9 June 2008
Mr H Crossan
The Headteacher
Standish Community High School
Kenyon Road
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WN6 ONX

Dear Mr Crossan

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 June 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my particular thanks to the staff and pupils for giving their time to meet with me.

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

As a result of the inspection on 1 March 2007, the school was asked to:

- Improve the use of information from monitoring and evaluation to drive improvement faster across the school.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching to offer appropriate levels of challenge to all students.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management at all levels.
- Strengthen links with local partners to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all learners.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

When pupils join the school in Year 7 their attainment is above average overall. Standards remain above average overall by the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. However, the trend in pupils' achievement has declined from satisfactory overall in 2005 to significantly lower than average in 2006 and 2007. The school has recognised this problem and has taken steps to address underachievement through a range of strategies. Systems for tracking pupils' progress and reporting achievement have improved considerably since the last inspection. Pupils who are failing to meet expected levels are identified, supported and challenged. Targeted groups in Years 9, 10 and 11, including vulnerable pupils, experience a range of supportive

interventions to help them reach their potential. Pupils work alongside teachers to set their own targets for work, behaviour and attitudes to learning. Intervention strategies include booster classes as well as sessions to help pupils develop their social awareness and manage conflict. Individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been redesigned to be more focused on learning and achievement. Reports to parents now include detailed information on standards, progress and targets alongside grades for effort, attitude and behaviour, and individual departmental commentaries. Current school data indicate that satisfactory progress is now being made at both key stages and the school is on track to meet its Key Stage 4 targets in most subjects.

The school has taken action to strengthen links with local partners to broaden the curriculum and better meet the needs of all learners. The introduction of new vocational routes at Key Stage 4 is helping to address some issues of disaffection by enabling a wider range of pupils to access suitable qualifications. Standish is a lead school working with the local authority to plan the introduction of a diploma in information and communication technology (ICT) for 2010. Planning is underway to offer an alternative curriculum for a small cohort of vulnerable Year 7 pupils to ease transition. Curriculum innovation is an area which the school agrees requires further attention to ensure all pupils' needs are well met.

Since the last inspection, school improvement planning is more detailed and focused on achievement. The introduction of regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by the senior leadership team, and joint observations with heads of department, has improved self-evaluation at all levels. Plans are in place to further devolve monitoring and evaluation to departments to strengthen the role of middle managers. Several middle managers are attending leadership training to further develop their skills. The heads of core subjects have benefited from the support they have received from local authority consultants, including helping departments to analyse their data more effectively. Newly developed links between the school's first specialist department, languages, and its the second specialism in mathematics is helping to bring innovations to teaching and learning by the sharing of good practice.

Weaknesses in teaching and learning identified by lesson monitoring have been addressed through whole-school in-service training, resulting in more effective and challenging lessons. Pupils report that lessons are now more interactive and that behaviour has improved in the classroom and around the school since the introduction of new reward systems and more lunchtime activities. Lessons observed during the visit were well planned and stimulating. Teachers made particularly good use of ICT, including using the Internet, to enhance their teaching.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Palmer".

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector/ Additional Inspector