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13 March 2009

Mr A Worthington
Headteacher
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West Yorkshire
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Dear Mr Worthington

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Queensbury School

Following my visit with Jane Austin HMI, Stephen Wall and Bernard Jones, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 11 to 12 March, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Interim Executive Board (IEB), the Director of Education for Bradford and Education Bradford.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Gueli

Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Queensbury School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 11 to 12 March

Evidence

Inspectors visited 29 lessons, attended two registrations and one assembly, observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with groups of students, the headteacher and other nominated staff, representatives of Education Bradford, the Chair of the IEB and the school's National Challenge Adviser.

Context

Since the time of the last inspection five staff have left the school and three have joined. The departing head of faculty for science has been replaced by an internal appointment. A special needs coordinator has recently been appointed and will join the school in May. The support of the partnership headteacher has been reduced from three days per week in the autumn term to two days per week for the spring term. All students in Year 10 were on work experience during the visit.

Achievement and standards

The school has provided intensive, targeted support in Years 9 and 11 to raise standards and achievement. The school is able to show that this is starting to have a positive impact as standards in these two years are now rising. Targets set are more demanding and procedures for tracking students' progress are embedded across the school. Staff at all levels, and especially middle leaders, are more confident in using the outcomes of assessment to identify and provide targeted intervention to help students who are underachieving to get back on track. This, together with improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and better student attitudes and behaviour, is starting to drive up standards and achievement.

Year 11 students have benefited from high levels of support in response to rigorous monitoring of their progress during recent months. The school's tracking data and GCSE module test results already received indicate that the proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE is set to improve significantly in comparison to 2008. Similarly, the proportion attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics is predicted to rise to just below the 2008 national average figure. This indicates that the current Year 11 students are on track to reach standards broadly in line with, or just above, levels commensurate with their attainment on entry to the school.

The school's analysis shows that overall current standards in Year 9 are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. However, the proportion of students predicted to attain the higher levels is likely to be below target for all three core subjects. While data show that the wide range of improvement strategies introduced in Year 9 are starting to have a positive impact on students' outcomes, it also shows that students' progress in Years 7 and 8 has yet to improve significantly.

Standards in the sixth form have been maintained and improved significantly at A2 level in Year 13 in 2008. After a period of declining numbers entering the sixth form in recent years, current signs of an upturn in numbers are evidence of renewed confidence in the sixth form.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve students' achievement particularly at Key Stage 3 – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Students throughout the school, and their teachers, describe behaviour as much improved. This is due in part to the consistent application by all staff of the behaviour policy which has had a significant impact in helping students take greater responsibility for their own behaviour. During the visit inspectors saw no evidence of seriously disruptive behaviour in classrooms or around the school and noted that inappropriate behaviour rarely disrupted the learning of others. This is reflected in the continued fall in the number of negative behaviour points recorded and a significant decrease in the number of referrals to the student isolation room. Students do not enjoy such referrals and the sanction works for most. However, there is a small minority of students for whom this sanction is not a deterrent and their attendance at the centre is too regular. The school has not yet found alternative strategies to reduce the time these students spend away from the classroom. The number of exclusions has continued to decline demonstrating a significant improvement since the inspection of May 2008. Analysis of records at the last monitoring visit showed that a small number of teachers were associated with a substantial proportion of behaviour referrals. However, the most recent data indicates that the number of teachers in this group has diminished significantly in response to effective training by senior managers and good quality support from Education Bradford consultants.

There have been very few reported racist incidents this term as the school's work to improve students' attitudes and promote cohesion within the school community takes effect. Inspectors noted positive relationships between students of different racial and other backgrounds and this was confirmed in discussion with students in all years. The school has started to implement its good planning to broaden students' appreciation of the diversity of cultures in modern Britain. These plans are evidenced in subject schemes of work, assemblies and other curricular initiatives.



However, implementation is at an early stage and the full impact has yet to be realised.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Eradicate the poor behaviour of the significant minority of students who display inappropriate behaviour both in lessons and around school – good.
- Ensure students are fully prepared for life in a multicultural society – satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Strategies to improve teaching and learning are beginning to pay dividends. The school's monitoring indicates that these measures have had a positive impact on the proportion of consistently good lessons and reduced the number of lessons that are inadequate. Inspection evidence indicates that this evaluation is largely accurate. Nonetheless, further improvement is required both in eradicating the remaining inadequate teaching and to increase the proportion of lessons where learning is outstanding. Of the 25 lessons observed in Key Stages 3 and 4 during the inspection only one was of this high standard.

A common lesson planning format has been introduced across the school. Its detailed requirements are aimed at embedding good practice, in particular the effective use of assessment information to match teaching accurately to students' learning needs. Lesson observations indicate that this is having a positive impact overall. In the better lessons, planning is detailed with learning objectives and outcomes that, when shared with pupils, give clear direction to their learning. These indicate what is expected of all, most or some in the class and support teachers' high expectations. Learning builds well on students' prior knowledge and understanding through sharply targeted tasks that encourage students to become active learners. Frequently, as progress is checked during lessons, objectives are linked to external examination or assessment criteria against which pupils have regular opportunities to evaluate their own performance and that of their classmates. Other common features of the better lessons observed include: engaging introductory activities that tune pupils into the lesson; challenging questioning with time for reasoned answers; and the effective use of resources including interactive whiteboards.

In contrast with the better lessons, those where learning is satisfactory or inadequate often lack a sense of urgency and move at a slower pace. Teachers tend to dominate and this reinforces students' passivity, especially when there are few opportunities to develop learning by sharing ideas. Despite increased access to data about pupils' performance, teachers' expectations of students are frequently too low. Dull, undemanding activities limit progress and lead to restlessness and

inattentiveness in some instances. Questioning lacks challenge and does not always include students other than volunteers. Too much time is spent on over-complex self- and peer-assessment. Although planning for these lessons frequently addresses the varied needs of students, it is not delivered fully and this hinders the progress of some students.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that it is consistently good or better in order to remove the legacy of underachievement – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Since the last visit the school improvement plan has been revised to incorporate sharper success criteria and milestones against which progress in relation to each of the areas for improvement can be measured. Approaches to monitoring the impact of action are more robust and include external moderation to ensure judgments are more secure. This has increased the accuracy with which the school is evaluating the quality of its work. Middle leaders in particular are becoming more skilled in assessing the quality of provision within their subject areas, supported by regular paired observation with senior leaders. Weekly learning walks by faculty leaders are helping to ensure agreed elements to improve the quality of teaching and learning are consistently utilised. Where weaker practice is identified in relation to the quality of teaching or behaviour management, for example, personalised support packages are put in place to improve performance and these are beginning to have an effect. Capacity to improve the quality of teaching and learning using school-based staff is developing. For example, one colleague has recently gained Advanced Skills Teacher status and several others have successfully completed training to act as peer coaches. The use of data has become more effective. Senior leaders are monitoring progress more closely and frequent dialogue about student progress is helping to raise expectations of what students can achieve. Middle leaders are also gaining confidence in using data effectively to identify and take action to address underperformance. Mechanisms to ensure both senior and middle leaders are held to account have been strengthened. For example, weekly one to one meetings between senior leaders and faculty leaders with a common agenda are contributing to the increased focus on raising standards and achievement in all subject areas. The IEB is well informed about the school's progress through regular updates from both senior and middle leaders. This has increased the degree of challenge that the IEB provides. The expertise of IEB members is also being well used to support the school's improvement. The contribution of the specialist subjects to whole school improvement was not a focus at this visit.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Ensure leadership and management at all levels have the necessary capacity to improve the outcomes for students more rapidly – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority support plan has been reviewed to align with the revised school development plan and it also incorporates sharper success criteria for each area for improvement. External support continues to contribute to improving the quality of leadership, teaching and learning and teacher's skills in behaviour management. External support needs are regularly re-evaluated to ensure that the changing needs of the school are suitably met. Regular meetings to discuss progress involving school-based staff, external partners and representatives of Education Bradford are helping to maintain a focus on evaluating the impact of actions. Those working most closely with the school, including the National Challenge adviser, have an accurate view of the progress that has been made. In contrast, the termly reviews led by other Education Bradford colleagues in both the autumn and spring terms have presented an over-generous view of the school's progress in relation to some areas for improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

The priorities for further improvement remain those identified at the time of the inspection in May 2008.