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Mr A Worthington
Headteacher
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Queensbury
Bradford
West Yorkshire
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Dear Mr Worthington

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Queensbury School

Following my visit with Peter Bannon and Ronald Bulman, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 9 and 10 June, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

This visit was the third 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 be appointed.

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 third monitoring inspection on 9–10 June 2009

Evidence

Inspectors visited 24 lessons and an assembly, scrutinised documents and met with groups of students, the headteacher and other nominated staff, a representative of Education Bradford, the chair of the IEB and the school's National Challenge Adviser.

Context

Since the time of the last visit four staff have left the school and one, the special needs coordinator, has joined. The partner headteacher has continued to support the school for two days each week.

Achievement and standards

The improvements in behaviour and more importantly in attitudes to learning as a consequence of better teaching means students are beginning to make progress leading to rising standards. The school's own assessment information suggests that these factors, combined with the impact of targeted support in Years 9 and 11, have raised standards to be broadly in line with national figures. In Year 11 module test results, completed coursework and on-going assessment give the school confidence that their GCSE targets will be reached. The school also has evidence to indicate that better progress is being made in other year groups compared with the previous monitoring visit. However, despite some improvement in students' achievements, target setting is still not sufficiently robust. Year 9 targets are generally challenging but those set for some higher attaining students lack aspiration. In Year 7, targets are not updated quickly enough once information from primary schools is received and likewise available data for Year 10 does not always reflect students' most recent performance. Consequently, students are not always stretched to reach their full potential.

The school is conscious of the need to sustain improvements in achievement and reduce the reliance on intervention. Consequently, additional strategies such as the introduction of assertive mentoring for Year 10 students are being used to help students take more responsibility for their own learning and progress.

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

The school has continued to embed its behaviour for learning policy and a well understood and consistently used system of sanctions and rewards is now in place. The school has also worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning which has in turn increased students' levels of engagement and their desire to do well. Students understand the importance of good behaviour and regular attendance and their contribution to successful learning and the improvement of their life chances. The vast majority are positive in outlook, orderly and polite around school and show good levels of attention and participation in their lessons. The school recognises and celebrates good behaviour through its merit system, special assemblies, and the opportunity for a trip out of school. The improvement in behaviour is being scrupulously monitored. For example, detailed records show the rapidly declining frequency of serious incidents and significant improvements in behaviour for some closely monitored individual students. There has been an increased focus on the very small number of students whose behaviour still falls short of what the school requires. This has resulted in specially tailored provision based on the school's detailed knowledge of each individual's circumstances, difficulties and needs. Records confirm that there have been no recent permanent exclusions.

Actions to ensure students are fully prepared for a life in a multicultural society have gathered pace considerably since the last visit. Effective joint working between school staff and the partner headteacher has ensured that the school's planned multifaceted approach to this area for improvement is being implemented well. Evaluation has been undertaken by both the school and the IEB confirming that positive outcomes are evident in various aspects of school life. For example, a small cohort of students demonstrated their increased awareness of cultural diversity in a presentation to their peers. Prominent visual displays around the school successfully reinforce the message of cultural and racial harmony. Interviews undertaken on behalf of the IEB with students in both the main school and the sixth form confirm that students of different ethnic backgrounds enjoy positive relations and work well together. Students are becoming increasingly involved with the local community, taking part in visits to places of worship and the Anne Frank project. The curriculum, including specialist assemblies, elements of the citizenship programme, a project with a school in Bangladesh and termly challenge days are making an increasingly good contribution to students' knowledge and understanding of life in a multicultural society. At subject level, schemes of work have been substantially rewritten to include more frequent reference to equality, diversity, and community cohesion issues. These aspects are stated in lesson objectives and the increased awareness of students is evident in their verbal responses in class, the cooperative spirit in many classrooms and in the content of their written work.

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 – good.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching continues to improve with improvements brought about by the accurate identification of areas for development and a carefully tailored approach to developing the practice of individual teachers and departments. The use of external support to complement the development work of well skilled school based staff has been effectively managed. The school's monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning indicates that the proportion of good teaching has increased and the proportion of inadequate teaching has reduced. Progress in relation to increasing the proportion of good lessons is in line with the target in the school's improvement plan. Less success has been achieved in increasing the proportion of outstanding lessons and consequently this is the current focus for a specific group of teachers. In addition, the school identifies that a very small minority of teachers still deliver some lessons which are inadequate. However, all lessons seen during the visit were at least satisfactory, many were good and a small number were outstanding.

The common approach to lesson planning is well embedded. Assessment information is being used more consistently to plan lessons that meet the needs of different groups of learners with objectives linked to specific grades or levels. Students are routinely made aware of the intended learning and lesson activities are frequently related to meeting specific objectives. Better use of assessment in lessons is allowing the teacher and the students to reflect on progress more regularly. Other assessment information gained, for example, by the use of practice examination papers is being increasingly well used to plan lessons to address specific gaps in students' knowledge. More lessons feature a good degree of challenge for students and incorporate a range of activities which help to maintain a brisk pace. Relationships are good and teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. In the best lessons the responsibility for learning is placed clearly on the students and this is successfully promoting their independence and confidence. However, in some lessons the learning is still too teacher-led and students are very reliant on the teacher to make progress. Similarly, while in some lessons support staff make a good contribution to students' progress, in other lessons their impact on improving learning is less evident.

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 previous visit senior leaders in conjunction with external partners have sustained progress in making the necessary improvements to the issues from the section 5 inspection in May 2008. Teaching and learning continue to improve, standards are rising and there has been good progress on the issues of behaviour and ensuring that students are prepared for life in a multicultural society. There is a good team spirit and all staff are committed to the school's improvement. Middle leaders are better equipped with the skills and knowledge to hold their faculties to account and are focusing more rigorously on how well students achieve and the reasons why some are not achieving as well as they could. Middle leaders are also taking more responsibility for the quality of student behaviour which they link to the quality of teaching and learning. However, there are variations in the quality of leadership across faculties and this is still having an adverse impact on student achievement.

Class teachers are more confident in the interpretation and use of assessment data and external moderation confirms that teacher assessment at Key Stage 3 is robust. Regular meetings between heads of faculty and their team members, together with the continuation of learning walks to focus on particular aspects of teaching and learning, are providing an effective basis for moving faculties and departments forward. The headteacher has taken steps to rationalise the leadership structure and this process is almost complete.

The IEB continues to provide an effective objective overview of the progress that the school is making in relation to the areas for development. The one to one working of IEB members with the leadership team member leading on each area for improvement facilitates the effective monitoring of progress for each issue. A rolling programme of middle leader presentations to the monthly IEB meetings is ensuring the IEB is well informed about the school's progress and well placed to provide a good degree of challenge and support.

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

Education Bradford's (EB) support plan has been reviewed to refine support in response to the findings of recent monitoring and evaluation and to incorporate targets for 2010. The increased confidence of EB in relation to the school's capacity to improve is reflected in the decreasing levels of support planned for the autumn term and beyond as part of its exit strategy. The partner headteacher has continued to provide effective support for the school's progress, particularly in relation to improving behaviour and ensuring students are well prepared for life in a multicultural society. The evolution of his role in the autumn term to focus on long-

term developments for the school confirms the growing capacity within the leadership team. There is a good working relationship between the school improvement officer and the school. This provides effective moderation of the school's quality assurance judgments and good support for developments in relation to the areas for improvement. The National Challenge Adviser has been rigorous in his approach to supporting the drive to raise standards and is confident that the school's predictions for GCSE results in 2009 are secure.

Priorities for further improvement

- To ensure all students have challenging targets in all subjects.