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15 October 2010

Mr Chris Thompson  
Headteacher  
Oakbank School  
Oakworth Road  
Keighley  
West Yorkshire  
BD22 7DU

Dear Mr Thompson

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Oakbank School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 14 October 2010 and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on special thanks to the students who met with me at lunchtime.

As a result of the inspection on 18 and 19 January 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 is making **good** progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

Improvements in attendance and behaviour, greater accountability among staff and a relentless drive to improve the quality of teaching are already having a positive impact on standards and achievement. Students in Key Stage 3 are making much better progress in English, mathematics and science. In the 2010 examinations, there was a three percentage point improvement in the proportion of Year 11 students obtaining five high grade GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, despite the cohort having lower prior attainment than in previous years. There was a very noticeable improvement in students' progress in mathematics, albeit from a low base, but less improvement in English. Students of middle ability made better progress but strategies to increase the progress of students of lower ability have yet to have an impact. The school's tracking data and results from early GCSE entries suggest that success rates will be higher next summer. Achievement in the sixth form improved considerably this year.

The system for monitoring the quality of teaching is very robust. It pinpoints quickly any outstanding practice to be shared and areas of weakness that need to be addressed. Teaching and learning have improved markedly and lesson observation records show less variation in quality between subjects. Teachers receive comprehensive data reports that are used increasingly to plan lessons. Subject teams analyse data regularly and work together to plan strategies and new approaches to address any concerns. Interventions are more accurately targeted and tailored much more closely to individuals' needs. Time is scheduled for staff to share good practice from within the school and outside.

Assessment practices are much sharper. Teachers use skilled questioning to probe understanding and take time during lessons to recap and check on learning. Target-setting and monitoring systems used to very good effect in the sixth form are now being used in the main school. Students know their target grades and say they are given lots of help with ways to improve their work. Managers make unannounced checks on marking and the quality of written feedback has improved. Self and peer assessment are developing very well and there are pockets of outstanding practice. Teachers are making excellent use of success criteria in some areas but the practice is still developing in others.

The sports specialism is contributing well to improvements. Specialist staff share best practice in school, regionally and nationally. Sports projects help improve outcomes for students in danger of underachieving and sport is used to motivate learners in subjects such as mathematics. A student leadership initiative, led by the sports team, provides literacy and numeracy help to local primary schools. The school has met its specialist targets.

Oakbank has received good help and support from Education Bradford, from its School Improvement Partner and from other local schools especially Beckfoot School.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jan Bennett  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2010**

- Raise achievement and improve standards in English and mathematics by:
  - ensuring students reach their challenging targets at GCSE level
  - increasing the rate of progress so that it is at least satisfactory for all students, and particularly for those of middle and lower ability.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning by:
  - helping more teachers use the data that are available to plan lessons that are more appropriate for students of all abilities and have sufficient challenge
  - building in opportunities within the school day for teachers to share the good and outstanding practice that exists in some areas of the school.
- Sharpen systems for assessment by:
  - giving students more opportunities to demonstrate their learning in lessons
  - increasing the use of success criteria, so that students have a deeper understanding of what constitutes high-quality work
  - increasing the opportunities for students to mark their own and each others' work in lessons
  - ensuring that the quality of marking and feedback to students is consistently high.