

PROTECT-INSPECTION

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 1231231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566855
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
gail.hill@cfbt.com



9 February 2012

Mrs Wright
Headteacher
Joseph Rowntree School
Haxby Road
New Earswick
York
North Yorkshire
YO32 4BZ

Dear Mrs Wright

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools with an additional focus on behaviour: Joseph Rowntree School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Peter McKay, additional inspector, on 8 February 2012 and for the information you provided during the unannounced inspection. Please also pass on our thanks to the governing body, the School Improvement Partner, the staff and the many students who spoke to us during the day and in arranged meetings.

Since the last inspection there have been some important changes in staffing. You have appointed a new head of department in design and technology and substantially a new team in English, including a head and second in department who are both new to the school. There have also been some changes to the work of the governing body. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been elected and a new committee has been established which is focused specifically on monitoring and reviewing the progress made in implementing the areas for improvement from the last inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 15 September 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 has made good progress in making improvements and the effectiveness of the school in improving pupils' behaviour is good.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Senior leaders have made progress in raising students' achievement and attainment. In 2011, the school gained its best ever results at GCSE with 62% of students obtaining five subjects including English and mathematics at the higher grades. This was a considerable improvement on the 47% who obtained this benchmark in 2010. This improvement is to be explained principally by a marked improvement in students' attainment in English and

January 2012

PROTECT-INSPECTION



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

mathematics. However, students' performance in different subjects in 2011 was more variable and improvements are not yet fully embedded across the curriculum. Nevertheless, more students are meeting their targets which are challenging and the school's predictions indicate that this progress will be sustained in 2012. Students are making more progress not least because there is better teaching, a much greater focus on learning, and improved management of poor behaviour in lessons. In addition, a revised data management system and robust monitoring have meant that students' performance is checked more regularly and incidents of underachievement are being identified more effectively than before. This has led to more focused intervention to support those most in need of assistance as they prepare for their GCSE examinations.

The quality of teaching

The school has taken a number of steps which are effectively improving teaching and learning. Good practice is being increasingly shared with colleagues across the school. Lesson planning is more systematic and focused on learning. Resources used are more motivating than in the past. Assessment information, despite some inconsistency on the part of class teachers, is being used more effectively to ensure appropriate challenge and expectation for all students. Middle leaders are developing their skills as leaders of learning; they are using data in a much more proactive way to identify underachievement and take remedial action. In these ways more students are benefiting from better teaching and making better progress. As a result, in the best lessons, students were willingly engaged with their learning because they had been motivated and the activities provided offered challenge and interest for every student, regardless of ability. However, in weaker lessons progress is not rapid enough. In these lessons teaching does not always consider carefully enough the needs of all students. There was also too much 'teacher talk' and insufficient opportunities were provided for students to discuss and debate and become independent learners. Where students were expected to be passive learners and were not given a variety of resources which were engaging and activities which were motivating, their interest soon waned with a corresponding decline in their behaviour. Marking continues to be variable; there is good practice but marking does not always clearly outline the precise steps students need to take to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is improving. Students and staff report this and behaviour observed in lessons and around the school during this visit was almost all good, though the progress in lessons of a small number of students was impeded by their own low-level misbehaviour. However, this was invariably linked to inappropriate work which did not meet their needs. The introduction of a new behaviour policy with clear expectations linked to rewards and sanctions is beginning to have a positive effect. The number of callouts, where a student has to be removed from a lesson, has fallen, as have the number of fixed-term exclusions. Students understand the consequences of any poor behaviour and are adamant that this is a safe school. They add, though, that the new behaviour policy is not consistently applied by staff. A key factor in explaining the improvement in behaviour is the new building. Students

take pride in their surroundings and there is a calm and orderly atmosphere throughout the day. As a result, the climate for learning is good and this has contributed to the improvements in teaching and achievement.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

Since the inspection, the school has been increasingly successful in tackling the areas for improvement. Students' performance is analysed, underachievement identified and intervention structured to raise achievement. The remaining pockets of underperformance in teaching are being tackled. Behaviour has improved, as has attendance. Monitoring and evaluation systems have been strengthened and middle leaders are held to account. The headteacher, together with her determined leadership team and increasingly effective group of middle leaders, is raising expectations among both staff and students. Self-evaluation is becoming more robust and the school is clear on the weaknesses which need to be dealt with and the barriers which have to be overcome to improve outcomes for all students. As a result, the school is enhancing its capacity to improve. Action plans to bring about further improvement are in place, although their success criteria do not always focus explicitly enough on the impact of actions. The governing body has a sound understanding of its role and responsibilities. They are focused on holding senior leaders to account and on the issues which will help the school to improve. The completion of the building programme has meant that the school can now focus exclusively on the areas for improvement and there is a commitment across the school to addressing those areas and to improving outcomes for all students.

The school has appreciated the support it has received from the local authority, the School Improvement Partner, a National Leader of Education, and the work of a number of consultants. It acknowledges that this advice and guidance are effectively strengthening the work of leaders and managers at all levels across the school as well as individual members of staff.

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

Michael Maddison
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2010

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - all lessons are planned to a consistently high standard
 - Resources are engaging and motivate the students
 - assessment is accurate and is used to ensure that all lessons meet the needs and interests of all students.

- Ensuring that all students make better progress by:
 - regularly and consistently monitoring, reviewing and evaluating actions to ensure that they have the maximum impact on outcomes for students.