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29 January 2013

Mrs B Young  
Headteacher  
Royds School Specialist Language College  
Pennington Lane  
Oulton  
Leeds LS26 8EX

Dear Mrs Young

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Royds School Specialist Language College.**

Following my visit to your school on 28 January 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, the Chair and two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The school improvement plan together with evidence from other monitoring activities was evaluated.

**Context**

There has been two staffing changes since the November inspection.

**Main findings**

Senior leaders have implemented a number of actions since the inspection designed to monitor the quality of provision, improve the quality of teaching and assure accountability. Middle leaders monitor their departments regularly and understand the need to consider whether teaching is good enough to enable all students to fulfil their capabilities. They are expected to hold staff to account if this is not the case and middle leaders benefit from working together and learn by observing practice elsewhere.

Senior leaders continue to monitor the non-negotiable elements that they expect to be present in lessons; also that lessons are planned and delivered properly. They are confident that improvements in teaching and learning are evident. Regular training sessions are held and staff are directed to the ones that best meet their needs. In addition, staff have discussed and marked a range of books so that there is a better understanding and consistency when marks are awarded to students. This is providing senior leaders with confidence that information about individual students is accurate and secured in evidence. However, many of the reports provided by leaders are merely descriptive and lack precise evaluation following routine monitoring. This diminishes the potential of monitoring as a tool to drive school improvement. Mixed messages have not been helpful for staff as they develop ways of working. Senior leaders and governors need to carefully consider how to make best use of the range of support available to meet their needs.

Governors know that improvement is needed throughout the school, including in the sixth form. Senior leaders have written an action plan but it lacks measurable targets at regular intervals so that governors, with senior leaders, can check whether these are met and that students are making more than expected progress. Consequently, whether an action happens can be checked, but evaluating, for example whether teaching is improving, cannot be measured securely.

Senior leaders and governors are not yet taking sufficient action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on bring about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- sharpen the action plan so that leaders can clearly demonstrate and measure at regular intervals if interventions and the actions taken are having the intended impact
- ensure that all reports from leaders are evaluative and not merely descriptive

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

Local authority officers' conduct regular reviews of progress and have brokered links with other schools to support particular areas of work. For example, the mathematics department benefits from working with staff from Rossett School and middle leaders welcome the opportunity to attend meetings with staff from schools in the Leeds Learning Partnership. Senior leaders have connections with other schools in order to access support. The local authority agree that their plan needs to be adjusted as it lacks measurable goals so that the work of the local authority consultants can be evaluated. The school improvement partner has recently started work looking at the quality of teaching and learning. Joint observations are being conducted so that staff can understand why lessons are judged in a particular way and to ensure greater consistency within the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**