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7 May 2015

Mr Richard Crane  
Headteacher  
Joseph Rowntree School  
Haxby Road  
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York  
North Yorkshire  
YO32 4BZ

Dear Mr Crane

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Joseph Rowntree School**

Following my visit with Bernard Campbell, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 6 May 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the achievement of disadvantaged students. The inspection also focused on relevant aspects of the quality of leadership and management (including governance) at the school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, members of staff who have a responsibility for raising the achievement of disadvantaged students, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, a representative of the local authority and groups of students. Inspectors also scrutinised documents relating to the achievement, attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged students and the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement.

### **Context**

Since the school was last inspected, there has been a change of headteacher. The current headteacher has led the school since September 2013. Two new deputy headteachers have been appointed and there have been further changes to some

other senior leadership posts. New appointments have been made to many middle leadership posts. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in July 2014. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals has changed little and remains below the national average.

## **Main findings**

The inspectors' main focus was to evaluate the quality of the school's provision for disadvantaged students. Over recent years, the attainment of disadvantaged students in the school has been below that of similar students nationally and gaps between their attainment and that of other students in the school have widened. This is because disadvantaged students have consistently made slower progress than other students. In addition, the proportion of disadvantaged students absent from school has been above average. In 2014-15, close to one in five disadvantaged students was regularly absent.

The headteacher, together with a team of other leaders new to the school, is bringing about rapid cultural change by focusing on the quality of teaching and learning and analysing the progress students make more rigorously. School leaders and governors have recognised that the achievement of disadvantaged students is a key priority to improve. The curriculum has been adapted and disadvantaged students now have better access to academic subjects. Leaders make frequent checks on the quality of teaching and scrutinise students' work regularly. Some of these checks have focused specifically on the quality of provision for disadvantaged students. A strong programme of professional development is in place, which includes specific training for teachers on how to support the learning of disadvantaged students effectively. All teachers are provided with information showing how well students are progressing towards their targets. This has raised their awareness of the performance of disadvantaged students and those with a disability or special educational need. Some teachers use this information well. They consider the specific learning needs of individual students and plan practical strategies to support their learning. However, other teachers use this information less effectively and would benefit from further guidance.

A new data management system has been installed which is allowing leaders to make a more detailed analysis of the performance of different groups of students at Key Stage 4. The system is about to be adopted at Key Stage 3. Currently, leaders analyse the progress of disadvantaged students in Key Stage 3 from their starting points, but the analysis is not as detailed or as useful in focusing on the needs of different abilities. The school's current data show a higher proportion of students is on track to attain five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE level than last year. The data also show the proportion of disadvantaged students on track to attain this measure is higher than last year and that the gap between their attainment and that of their peers is likely to narrow in both English and mathematics. Disadvantaged students currently in the sixth form are generally on course to meet or exceed their targets.

Those who wished to do so have secured places at university or at appropriate work-related destinations.

Leaders have evaluated how effectively the pupil premium funding (additional government money) has been spent and have taken decisions to cut some more expensive and less effective areas of provision. Some funding has been used to develop the school's learning support unit which provides tailored small group and one-to-one teaching, predominantly for lower attaining students in Key Stage 3. The skilled members of staff in the unit ensure they know about the learning needs of students before they transfer from feeder primary schools and have good quality programmes in place to support students once they transfer to the school. As a result, the learning needs of lower attaining disadvantaged students in Key Stage 3 are now met effectively. This support has contributed to the better rates of progress disadvantaged students are making in Key Stage 3, particularly in English. The small number of looked after children in the school and those who attend the enhanced resource provision for autistic spectrum conditions receive good support that meets their specific needs.

Arrangements for checking on students' attendance have been underdeveloped in the past and the school did not collect detailed information on the attendance of different groups of students. The school has recently introduced a more rigorous system for analysing attendance and is beginning to hold year leaders more accountable for tackling the above-average levels of absence. This year the introduction of parent panels has engaged parents of students with low attendance in regular meetings to set and review short-term attendance targets. Better recording of the actions the school is taking means the school is now in a position to plan legal steps against parents who do not send their children to school.

Governors share the headteacher's ambition to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students. This year, they have ensured that this objective is central to the headteacher's own appraisal and that it is a shared objective within the appraisal of other key members of staff. The governors ensure that they receive regular information on the achievement of different groups of students and have received regular training and updates from the assistant headteacher with responsibility for disadvantaged students.

## **External support**

The local authority has highlighted its concerns regarding the achievement of disadvantaged students and has provided suitable challenge to school leaders. Representatives of the local authority have arranged to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the school's provision for disadvantaged students later this term.

### **The strengths in the school's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged students effectively to achieve their potential are:**

- all members of staff understand that raising the achievement of disadvantaged students is a priority. Teachers are increasingly using information they hold on students to tailor their teaching to meet the specific learning needs of disadvantaged students. These improvements are linked to a heightened focus on the quality of teaching and learning more generally, and the introduction of more personalised professional development programmes for teachers
- the curriculum has been adapted so that there are better opportunities for disadvantaged students to gain academic qualifications at Key Stage 4 and progress to the next stage of education
- there are better arrangements in place to support disadvantaged students when they transfer from feeder primary schools. Lower attaining students now receive good support in Key Stage 3 which helps them to make rapid progress in reading and writing.

### **The weaknesses in the school's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged students effectively to achieve their potential are:**

- the school's procedures for improving the attendance of students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have not been rigorous enough
- until recently, the school has not had sufficiently strong systems to analyse the progress of disadvantaged students or to evaluate their performance in detail. Consequently, some pupil premium funding was used to support initiatives that had no real impact on their achievement.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve the attendance of disadvantaged students so that it is at least in line with that of similar students nationally. Ensure year leaders have greater impact on reducing the regular absence of some disadvantaged students.

- Ensure all teachers make effective use of the information they hold on disadvantaged students to plan specific strategies to improve their learning.
- Develop better opportunities to support and challenge the most-able disadvantaged students, so that more of them make rapid progress.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills for York, to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**