

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View

Skelmersdale

WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 618 8524 **Direct T** 01695 566932

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 01695 729320

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct email: hcarnall@cfbt.com

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Mr Brian Kelly
Headteacher
Royds School
Pennington Lane
Oulton, Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS26 8EX

Dear Mr Kelly

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Royds School

Following my visit to your school on 13 May 2015 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in November 2014. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's action plan is now fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2014

- Strengthen the impact leaders and managers have on improving the school, including the sixth form, by:
 - improving the application of systems and processes to ensure the safety and well-being of the most vulnerable students in school
 - improving further students' behaviour by ensuring that all staff consistently apply the behaviour policy
 - ensuring all subject leaders monitor and enhance the quality of teaching effectively, so that it improves students' understanding, deepens their knowledge and always enables them to make at least good progress
 - improving the analysis of evidence about teaching, attendance, punctuality, behaviour and progress so all leaders know what is already strong, what needs to improve and how best to make sure that planned improvements take place effectively and consistently
 - ensuring that all staff are strenuously held to account for the quality of their teaching.

- Improve teaching and learning, and thereby raise achievement, especially in mathematics, for the most able students, for those supported by the pupil premium and for those who are disabled and have special educational needs, by making sure all teachers:
 - use assessment data more effectively to plan lessons which provides work at the right level for all students
 - consistently challenge all students so that they attain the highest grades possible at GCSE
 - regularly find out how students are progressing in lessons and then adjust their teaching accordingly
 - improve marking and feedback so that it supports students more effectively in their learning.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 13 May 2015

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, three governors including the vice-Chair of the Governing Body and students. The inspector observed lessons to see students at work. A number of documents were scrutinised, including the revised school action plan and local authority statement of action, subject development plans and the single central register.

Context

The deputy head of the physical education department, one part-time teacher of humanities, one mathematics teacher and one science teacher have left the school since the previous monitoring inspection. New subject leaders in information and communication technology and design technology have joined the school.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and senior leaders have worked hard to revise and improve the school action plan. It now contains clear timescales for when actions will occur. It has clear and measurable outcomes that are helping leaders check whether their actions are having the intended impact. Leaders are using this plan well to chart the rate of progress they are making.

This in turn is having a positive impact on the role governors play. They are finding the inclusion of clear timescales and dates for when actions are to be completed helpful. This is helping governors check and challenge school leaders on the progress and impact their work is having on tackling the serious weaknesses in the school.

In contrast to this, the quality of middle leadership remains variable. Subject development plans are not always sharp or clear enough in showing how and when actions will improve teaching and students' achievement. Consequently, the quality of teaching is mixed. Some middle leaders are not effective enough in challenging teachers over the frequency and quality of their marking and feedback.

Students have noticed changes in the way the school is being led and managed. Students say that the headteacher and other staff are visible around the school and this reassures them that if they have any problems they know who to go to. During break times, staff effectively supervise potential 'hot spots' around the school where there is a risk of overcrowding. Students report that this makes them feel safer. The headteacher has started to hold 'Breakfast meetings' every Friday with groups of students to help him gain a better understanding of students' perceptions and concerns in school as well as gather evidence on the impact of actions to improve behaviour and teaching.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- School leaders are now working with a partner school, Trinity Academy in Halifax. There are emerging signs that this partnership is proving beneficial. This includes improved monitoring of behaviour, attendance and teaching. The introduction of non-negotiable minimum expectations in lessons is also starting to improve levels of consistency. Indications suggest that Year 11 achievement will rise this year, especially the progress of students in mathematics.
- Senior leaders have begun to support middle leaders in developing their ability to lead and improve teaching. This includes observing lessons together to agree on the quality of teaching seen. However, senior leaders recognise that further work is needed, particularly around improving the consistency and quality of marking and feedback and the impact that school training is having on strengthening teaching.
- In-house attendance officers who focus on tackling poor attendance coupled with the introduction of a new behaviour policy are showing that attendance is improving and fixed-term exclusions are reducing significantly.
- The safety and well-being of students is being reviewed systematically and effectively. As a result, there is now a greater vigilance and focus on safety of students. The school site is cleaner and students' toilets are better supervised by staff.
- Leaders are more alert and responsive to allegations about bullying now. The online alert system 'Tell Us' coupled with the higher profile of behaviour and safety in assemblies is leading to incidences of bullying reducing over time. Students say they feel confident that bullying will be dealt with effectively.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high. There are times when students argue with their teacher, shout across the classroom or are quietly off task and this is not dealt with effectively. Teachers do not always effectively challenge students when they produce untidy work or arrive to lessons without a pen or a ruler.
- Leaders recognise that more work is needed to ensure there are more tangible and regular rewards for those students who meet and exceed school expectations. Not enough students value the stamps that are given out at the end of lessons.
- A small number of students with challenging behaviour are frequently sent to the Isolation Room. It is not clear what alternative strategies are currently in

place to improve their behaviour when it is clear that this sanction is proving ineffective.

- Governors do not have a clear enough understanding about the support the local authority is providing and, therefore, are not sure of the impact this work is having.

External support

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the local authority has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose. It contains clearer timescales for when support will be provided and is well aligned to the school plan. There are monthly meetings with the school to review the progress that is being made. Discussions are now more focused and purposeful when evaluating the progress the school is making. The local authority has recently commissioned a school-to-school partnership with Trinity Academy in Halifax, but there is limited evidence of significant impact at this early stage.