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8 December 2015

Mr Brian Kelly
Headteacher
Royds School
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Dear Mr Kelly

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Royds School

Following my visit to your school on 1 December 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 third 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

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 provide 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.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 1 December 2015

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders and four middle leaders. Meetings took place with three governors, including the new Chair of Governors, two groups of pupils and the local authority school improvement officer. Two learning walks were conducted, one with the head of mathematics and the other in history and geography. A variety of documentation was reviewed, including records of monitoring of teaching and achievement, attendance information and minutes from governing body meetings.

Context

Five teachers have left the school since the previous monitoring inspection. These include teachers of English, geography, drama and health and social care, science and modern foreign languages (MFL). There have been a number of new appointments, including a new deputy head of physical education (PE), two new science teachers, a mathematics teacher, a new teacher in health and social care and a teacher of law.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher is a significant driving force in the school. Due to his tenacious and determined leadership, significant progress is being made in tackling the areas for improvement. Expectations are being raised for both teachers and pupils and, as a result, overall outcomes in 2015 improved. However, the headteacher and his senior leaders have quickly identified particular issues that now need addressing if progress is to be sustained. This includes making sure that some teachers are more accurate in predicting how well their pupils will achieve in examinations.

Efforts to improve the safety and well-being of pupils are continuing to have a positive impact. Pupils that the inspector spoke with said that they feel behaviour continues to improve. The recently revised behaviour management system is understood well by both teachers and pupils and is helping teachers to tackle low-level disruption more quickly. Consequently, the number of exclusions has significantly reduced, as has the number of pupils being removed from lessons due to poor behaviour. The most vulnerable pupils say that they continue to feel safe and secure because of the increased staff supervision, particularly during breaktimes and at the changeover of lessons.

Teaching is also improving. Senior leaders are providing clear guidance, support and training for teachers. Pupils are seeing improvements in a number of lessons, particularly in relation to the increasing challenge in lessons and the progress they are making. Pupils have especially welcomed the improvements to marking and feedback, especially in mathematics.

Middle leaders continue to grow in confidence as they work alongside senior leaders to monitor and improve teaching. Regular visits to lessons and reviews of marking and feedback are showing leaders that improvements continue to be made. However, this information reveals that there are still some teachers who do not have high enough expectations. This small group of teachers do not follow the school marking and feedback policy well enough. As a result, these teachers do not effectively challenge pupils when they produce scruffy and poorly presented work or when pupils fail to reply to teacher suggestions for improvement.

Governors have a clear and accurate view of the progress the school is making and are now clear about the impact the local authority is having. This is because governors are starting to have a more visible role within school. Governors have been involved in joint learning walks with senior leaders and have attended teacher training sessions to gain a better understanding of teaching. Link governors are starting to come into school and gain a more in-depth understanding of what is going well and what needs improving. Governors are increasingly willing, and able, to challenge school leaders effectively. This has included challenging leaders to improve the progress of disadvantaged and more-able pupils in particular.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement

- Performance management is closely aligned to teachers' pay and pupils' progress. This is improving levels of teacher accountability and raising expectations. For those teachers who do not meet their targets, supportive plans are in place to help them improve.
- Pupil services were previously dotted around various parts of the school. These have now been centralised and this is helping to provide a helpful one-stop base to support pupils when they have attendance, uniform, health or other issues and concerns.
- The headteacher continues to regularly meet with groups of pupils during breakfast. This is helping to provide a useful insight into the impact actions are having and is helping to spot those areas that need improving further.
- Pupils value the rewards on offer for good attendance and behaviour. These include trips to local theme parks and vouchers to spend in a local shopping centre.
- Improved signage around the school and the introduction of a one-way system is helping pupils to move around the school. Leaders recognize, however, that 'hot spots' still remain and continue to supervise these areas well.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement

- The attendance and exclusion rates of disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled or have special educational needs (DSEN) are not improving fast enough in some year groups.

- Middle leaders are not always accurate enough in predicting how well older pupils will achieve in their examinations. Middle leaders are sometimes too optimistic or too cautious.
- The behaviour of some pupils on the school buses is not good enough. There are times when behaviour is too rowdy, loud and unacceptable.
- Governors have not reviewed a number of key policies in a timely manner, including the attendance and punctuality policy and the disability equality policy.
- The school website does not include a DSEN information report which explains the impact the school is having on improving outcomes for those pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs.

External support

The local authority is providing or brokering some valuable support. Regular joint review group meetings are a useful opportunity for local authority officers to review the progress school leaders are making. An external review, commissioned by, and involving, the local authority, confirmed the progress the school is making and identified useful and pertinent areas for improvement. The school improvement officer is new to the school and has made two visits so far. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this work.