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29 October 2015

Mr Anthony Guise  
Headteacher  
Calder High School  
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Dear Mr Guise

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Calder High School**

Following my visit to your school on 13 October 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. 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 May 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in May 2015, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that there are clear and time-related actions to tackle identified weaknesses in teaching
- refine further the checks made of assessments at Key Stage 3, making sure that they are accurate and reliable
- amend the improvement plan so that it is more helpful in showing the intended impact of actions at Key Stage 3, highlighting the role governors will play at regular intervals throughout the year in checking the progress being made.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the director of sixth form and the assistant headteacher in charge of teaching and learning. I met with five heads of faculty. I undertook two learning walks: one with the head of humanities and the other with the acting head of modern foreign languages. I met with three members of the governing body, a group of Key Stage 3 students and the local authority school effectiveness officer. I evaluated the school improvement plan and other monitoring evidence, including lesson observation records and marking and feedback in students' books.

## **Context**

There have been significant staff changes since the recent section 5 inspection. The head of mathematics and head of modern foreign languages have left and the head of science has stepped down. Two science teachers and two teachers of mathematics have left, including the deputy head of faculty in mathematics. New appointments include a new head of mathematics, two joint acting heads of science, an acting head of modern foreign languages, a director of sixth form and new teachers in science and mathematics.

## **Main findings**

You and your senior leaders have an honest and realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There is an open acceptance that, while improvements have been made since the time of the previous inspection, it remains a school that requires improvement. You are successfully building a culture and ethos of high expectations and a shared sense of purpose. You have a resolute determination to see staff and students achieve well. This approach is being modelled well by your senior leaders. Teachers with whom I spoke commented positively on the clear consistent messages coming from senior leaders, the support and accountability that was being put in place and how this was helping the school to tackle the identified areas for improvement.

Effective steps are being taken to tackle inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment. As a result of clear expectations, together with support and regular checking, the quality of marking and feedback is becoming more consistent. Students commented that this has been one of the most notable and welcomed changes since the inspection. They could clearly show examples of how feedback has helped improve their learning.

Like you, students recognise that, while improvements are being made to teaching, it can still depend too often on which teacher they have as to whether daily lessons are sufficiently challenging. Regular checks are being made on the quality of teaching. This work could be more effective if it was clear how the identified

weaknesses in teaching were going to be tackled and by when improvements need to be made.

Sensible steps have started to be taken to improve the consistency and accuracy of Key Stage 3 assessment. Faculties have audited carefully the knowledge and skills that students need to develop over time and have started to put in place agreed assessments to check on student progress. Guidance is also now provided for teachers when marking these assessments to increase the accuracy of this information. During the learning walks I made, leaders recognised that further checks are needed to make sure that all teachers mark accurately.

Governors continue to grow in confidence and are keen to challenge. They recognise the need to monitor and evaluate the actions taken by school leaders. The school plan often helps them do this as there are clear, measurable and ambitious targets set, particularly for Key Stage 4 and sixth form students. However, governors would benefit further if the plan clearly showed what was expected of Key Stage 3 students and explicitly stated the role governors will play at regular intervals throughout the year in evaluating the progress the school is making.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The quality of local authority support is ineffective. School effectiveness reports largely tell the school what it already knows. There is little that is evaluative and no evidence that visits are sufficiently probing. Too much is taken at face value and there is no evidence that visits seek to independently evaluate the effectiveness of school actions. Consequently, these visits lack challenge. When, on occasion, these reports do raise questions about the progress of subjects or groups of students, the issues are not followed up or reported on in future visits. This makes the reports of limited use to both school leaders and governors. A new school effectiveness officer started in September 2015, but the impact of his work is to be seen. The school has valued and benefited from the support provided by Rastrick High School in helping to create systems for better managing the money the school spends.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Calderdale. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**