

13 December 2006

Airedale High School
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Dear Mr Frazer

OFSTED MONITORING OF GRADE 3 SCHOOLS

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 December 2006, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. It was particularly useful that you were able to arrange meetings with all key people who have been instrumental in forging improvements since your last inspection.

As a result of the inspection in December 2005 the school was asked to: make sure that middle managers and teachers use information and data consistently to ensure that underachieving pupils are identified and supported throughout the school; ensure a consistent focus in all subjects on developing pupils' literacy skills to enable them to participate more fully in lessons and to improve their achievement; provide more opportunities in lessons to develop and enhance pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) to help them learn effectively in all subjects and to prepare them for further education and training; and improve attendance to national averages and reduce exclusions.

Under the clear direction of the headteacher the school has developed the role of senior and middle managers to ensure a cohesive approach to addressing all areas for improvement. Strategic planning in all four areas is interwoven so that all have the common aim to raise standards throughout school. Senior managers and governors monitor progress regularly. The local authority (LA) provide high quality support and challenge to the school.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making outstanding progress in addressing the issues for improvement.

In close collaboration with the LA the school has devised a tracking system which readily identifies rates of pupils' progress. Using a simple yet effective colour-coded system, school leaders and middle managers are able to

ascertain rates of progress by subject, cohort, individual pupil and year group. The information is used by key staff in the school. For example, it is used by managers for behaviour and attendance to identify the performance of vulnerable pupils and those at risk of exclusion. In this way the school has been able to ensure that these pupils are able to remain in school by having clearly focused learning activities which build on their individual targets.

The system has enabled the school to scrutinise the performance of pupils in the much improved 2006 end of key stage tests and examinations. This information is further disseminated to year group leaders and teachers to form the basis for discussions and to set challenging targets. Strategic planning links this work with the monitoring of teaching and learning where leaders can now identify and remedy underachievement. Lesson observations identify where best practice is leading to improved rates of progress. Teachers' confidence is growing as they willingly share this identified good practice.

The development of pupils' literacy skills has a high profile throughout the school. Assessment information is used to identify pupils' progress in literacy and the school is providing well planned strategies to address underperformance. In all lessons key words and skills form an integral part of the subject knowledge. Monitoring of teaching and learning always has a focus on the opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills. The school has been undeterred by the loss of the library in a recent fire and innovatively uses e-learning and Internet-based assessment activities to encourage and develop pupils' reading. The school is targeting those pupils identified with poor reading skills for an intensive, accelerated reader initiative.

ICT has been developing with vigour and enthusiasm. In lesson observations during the monitoring visit ICT was an integral part of pupils' learning opportunities. The school has increased the provision of ICT equipment for pupils and staff. Teachers ensure that pupils are able to use the technology to further their learning. Rigorous and intensive monitoring of teaching and learning targets the use of literacy and ICT in all subjects. Development plans for both areas of learning are clear and firmly rooted in raising attainment. Leadership and management in both areas are very good.

The exemplary strategies employed by the school have led to a drastic reduction in exclusions and increased levels of attendance. The redesign of the curriculum is ensuring more vocational opportunities for pupils so they want to come to school and learn. Pupils are fully engaged in their lessons therefore the incidences of disruption are much fewer. The support strategies for vulnerable pupils and pupils at risk of exclusion are highly successful in that ensuring that behaviour is consistently well managed throughout the school.

The 'Pod 4 U' unit and inclusion centre ensure that individual needs are being met. All pupils have welcomed the recently introduced reward system.

Positive discipline and praise by staff permeate the school and pupils respond with mutual respect and good manners. All are eager to achieve. The new school uniform is worn with pride by all pupils. Behaviour around school and in lessons is good.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

James Kilner

Her Majesty's Inspector