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Mr Dave Edmondson  
Trinity School  
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Dear Mr Edmondson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Additional Inspector Mr Dave Smith on 13 May 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the visit.

Since the inspection in November 2006 the organisation of the school's senior leadership has been changed. The senior team is now comprised of a principal, headteacher, deputy headteacher and a post-16 manager. A re-alignment of middle leadership posts has been undertaken with staff now holding school wide responsibilities. The school remains on three sites although its inclusion within the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme (BSF) will involve the closure of Kenton Lodge by 2010.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection in November 2006, the school was asked to:

- Ensure that the academic progress of every student is more closely monitored to help teachers plan more carefully for what they expect individuals to learn and offer better informed educational support and guidance to learners.
- Base self-evaluation on facts rather than feeling, so that the spectacular success of a few students does not cloud the ordinariness of the progress made by others.
- Address imbalances in the vocational and academic curriculum so that students have equal opportunities to succeed in both.
- Pursue all avenues to improve attendance.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress.

The school has made satisfactory progress in developing a whole school system to monitor the academic progress of the students. Relevant training has been provided to give staff the skills and confidence to assess students' work against National Curriculum levels. As a result, students are made aware of their current level of work and this is matched to targets for their future performance. However, the targets set for some more able students are not sufficiently challenging. The school has compelling evidence to demonstrate that most students are making satisfactory progress in the core subjects and now has the capacity to begin tracking students' development in the foundation subjects. Assessment data have been used appropriately to help organise class groups and to allocate students to appropriate courses.

In November 2006 the school lacked the necessary systems to accurately evaluate its performance. Important structural changes have since been made to the role and function of the senior leadership team and in the accountability of middle leaders for the performance of their respective areas of responsibility. These factors have combined to ensure there is now greater rigour to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. As a consequence, the senior leadership team has a more insightful understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this is helping them to make informed decisions about how the school should improve further. While matters have progressed satisfactorily, the quality of information being produced remains variable. For example, senior leaders have a better understanding of the quality of teaching and learning on all sites because observations of classroom practice are conducted systematically and to a consistent format. This information is used to inform future staff training and has become integral to the school's performance management arrangements. In contrast, while the school has developed a marking policy, its implementation is not routinely monitored. This has resulted in work not being marked by some staff with a consequent lack of guidance for students about how to improve their work. This remains a significant task to be tackled.

Satisfactory progress has been made in improving the balance between the vocational and academic aspects of the curriculum. A balanced curriculum has been made possible on all sites by additional training and the movement of staff to deploy their expertise. There is also some movement of students to provide them with access to appropriate facilities. The strengths of the vocational courses at Oakfield have been maintained while the curriculum has been improved to provide a better focus on academic subjects. Students study both English and mathematics each morning and this is enabling them acquire the skills needed to tackle more demanding courses. Students clearly enjoy subjects such as art and design and these help to generate interest in their studies more widely. Ambitious plans are in place to develop the Key Stage 4 curriculum further to provide students with greater opportunities to gain accreditation to support their future training and employment needs.

The school has introduced suitable measures and given due prominence to the manner in which it tackles attendance matters and is robust in the pursuance of those students and families whose attendance is poor. Appropriate targets for overall attendance and for reducing unauthorised absence are now set. Both targets were exceeded in 2007 although the current level of attendance is below target mainly through the absence of a group of persistent non-attending Key Stage 4 students.

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

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson HMI  
Her Majesty's Inspector