

PROTECT - INSPECTION

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Mr Mike Vening
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Vening

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Jim Bennetts Additional Inspector and myself inspected your school on 18 November 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the visit. Please pass on our thanks to the students, staff and the chair of governors for speaking with us during the day.

As a result of the inspection in November 2007, the school was asked to:

- Take decisive action to improve the effectiveness of the management of students' behaviour.
- Increase access to computers so that students have more opportunities to enjoy and extend their learning.
- Extend students' understanding of how to improve progress in their learning including improvements in their reading.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

Since the previous inspection the school has been subject to substantial changes, reflecting its position within the local authority's (LA) school re-organisation strategy. A new cohort of Key Stage 3 and 4 students has been accommodated and ten new staff appointments have been made including an assistant headteacher. In September 2008, King Edwin school in Norton was closed and its students transferred to the roll of Westlands. Key Stage 4 students from both schools who demonstrate behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) are currently located at the former King Edwin site (Westlands annex) and are likely to remain there until the end of the academic year because the Westland premises do not have sufficient capacity to house them. This situation has occurred because of delays in

building a new facility at Westlands federation partner, Abbey School, to provide accommodation for students on the autistic spectrum (ASD). These students will now relocate in September 2009 at which time all Key Stage 4 students will transfer to Westlands school and the King Edwin's site will be vacated. All Key Stage 3 students with BESD, including those formerly attending King Edwin's, are now taught exclusively at the main Westlands site. Primary age pupils and the school's residential provision also remain at Westlands. A parallel social care inspection was carried out of the residential facility on 17 and 18 November 2008 and is reported on separately.

New staff appointments are mainly located at the annex. The head of school (Westlands) was absent during the visit and the executive head of the federation has assumed responsibility for the daily management of the school. During the visit, primary age pupils were visiting a nearby stately home as part of their studies of Victorian England and were not seen. In addition, five Key Stage 3 students were on a field trip to North Yorkshire.

At Key Stage 3 there is improved consistency in the way students' behaviour is managed. In lessons this is aligned to better teaching and a curriculum which captures students' interests and improves their motivation. These factors combine to produce calm and mainly orderly environments which better support students' learning and achievement. Outside of lessons students are offered an appropriate range of support to occupy their time and manage their behaviour. This is mainly successful and where disruption does occur, staff deal with matters quickly and effectively. The school encountered significant initial difficulties in merging the respective Key Stage 4 cohorts, exacerbated by long standing tribal issues and very challenging behaviour. Staff have worked diligently to establish acceptable routines and expectations and this is reflected in a declining trend of exclusions, all temporary. Most classroom situations are now orderly with productive learning, although some lesson content could be more challenging. In a minority of situations disruptive behaviour does occur. Teaching and support staff coordinate their response to this well, but the instigators are left too long in classrooms and this impedes the learning and compromises the safety of others. Nonetheless, although the situation at Key Stage 4 remains potentially volatile, there has been a marked improvement in the management of behaviour since September 2008.

Students with autistic spectrum disorders continue to be managed effectively and make good progress in line with their targets.

The school has invested well in provision for information and communication technology (ICT). The purchase of new hardware to improve facilities at the annex and additional equipment installed at the main site has been effective in supporting students' learning. An audit of ICT provision has successfully identified weaknesses in both staff expertise and the curriculum. Staff training has increased their overall capacity and confidence to deliver an appropriate curriculum to students. Consequently, students enjoy using ICT equipment and this increases their motivation to remain on task and complete their work.

An effective tracking system is becoming established at Key Stage 3. However, it was not sufficiently in place during the last academic year to support students or avert disappointing results in the English national tests. Revised targets are, however, both realistic and challenging and the school's tracking system is better placed to help guide students towards attaining higher standards. At Key Stage 4 the school is increasingly effective in monitoring students' personal development but the monitoring of students' progress towards certification in Key Stage 4 courses is embryonic.

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

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson
Her Majesty's Inspector