

Suite 22 West
Lancs
Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566930
Direct F 01695 729320

05 November 2009

Mr T Griffiths
Headteacher
Kettlethorpe High School
Standbridge Lane
Sandal
Wakefield
WF2 7EL

Dear Mr Griffiths

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when my two colleagues and I inspected your school on 04 November 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit.

Several new staff have joined the school since the previous inspection. These include lead teachers in mathematics and English and a number of modern foreign languages teachers. There have also been changes in the senior leadership team and restructured responsibilities for delivering the school development plan.

As a result of the inspection on 01–02 October 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve standards and achievement, especially in mathematics
- extend the quality and consistency of teaching, including the feedback given to students
- improve the effectiveness of measures to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in teaching and its impact on learning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The inspection drew evidence from observation of 21 part lessons, meetings with staff and students and a range of documents about recent developments and progress.

Standards and achievement have improved, especially in mathematics. Unconfirmed GCSE results show that the improvements noted in 2008 have continued. The school is particularly proud that 82% of students attained five or more good GCSEs last year, a significant increase. As a result of significant improvement in mathematics, 60% of students gained a grade C or better, a nine-point rise on the previous year. In English, 64% gained grades in the A* to C range, sustaining the level seen the previous year. In general, students made the progress expected of them in both these key subjects. The number of students who achieved five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, was in line with the national level. Improvements continue: inspection evidence indicates that progress is now much better in mathematics as changes put in place in the past six months make their mark. Students are also making better progress in modern foreign languages as a result of better teaching this year. Progress remains satisfactory in English.

Students' progress is not fully consistent across groups. Fewer boys than girls attain five A* to C grade GCSEs including English and mathematics, and the school's analysis of recent results suggests that students with lower prior attainment make less than the expected progress in mathematics. The school is alert to performance variations, and its data show that the progress of students in more vulnerable groups in the current Year 11 is better than it was last year, as a result of improved tracking and interventions. Inspectors' observations across a range of subjects indicated slower progress by lower attainers and boys, but only in those lessons where teachers set lower challenges and a less vibrant pace of learning. When teaching was adapted to their needs, they did much better.

The quality of teaching has improved in key areas, although feedback to students remains variable. Both features are particularly noticeable in mathematics. Recent changes in staffing in modern foreign languages and English have had a positive effect. Strengths seen across the lessons sampled included better use of assessment to promote learning, more varied and mentally energising activities, good use of modern technology, especially interactive whiteboards, and well-targeted questioning. However, inconsistencies remain and a significant proportion of teaching remains satisfactory rather than good. For example, assessment is not used consistently to provide high enough challenge, targets are not always used to stretch students enough and marking is not yet of a consistently high quality. In addition, there are not enough opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills. In satisfactory lessons, teachers focused on the tasks to be completed rather than how much students learned. Some low-level disruption in lessons for lower attainers slowed the pace of learning.

The school's process for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and its impact on learning is being applied more effectively. More consistent and focused observations by senior leaders and external consultants have helped teachers to reflect on and improve the quality of their teaching, especially when teaching has been below the expected quality. The effectiveness of middle leaders in evaluating

teaching, learning and progress is more variable. In some cases, their evaluations show less rigour and clarity about how to make teaching better than satisfactory.

The capacity of the school to improve was good at the time of the last inspection. Satisfactory progress in strengthening this capacity is demonstrated by the school's improved results and the better quality of learning observed in areas where it had been weaker. These have been achieved through the strategic deployment of expert teachers, sharpening accountability for challenging targets and effectively managed interventions for target groups. The school has collaborated purposefully with the local authority and made productive use of external support to improve teaching. However, middle leaders are not yet having a strong enough impact on improving the quality of teaching to move the school towards being good overall.

The contribution of the school's specialism to its improvement is satisfactory. Challenging targets for computing have been met. Improved performance in mathematics has brought its targets within close range. The take-up of the specialist subjects by 16-year-olds has increased. Previously, the school has emphasised community and primary school links, but recently it has made more use of the specialism to lead developments within school, for example in interventions for students at risk of underachievement. It now remains for the teaching strategies being used successfully in mathematics to influence teaching across the school.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector