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30 June 2010

Mr R Whittaker  
Headteacher  
Allerton Grange School  
Talbot Avenue  
Leeds  
West Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Whittaker

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 June 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit.

The school moved to a new building, on the same site as the old school, in September 2009.

As a result of the inspection on 2 and 3 July 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve progress at Key Stage 3 and 4, particularly among lower-attaining students and those from Black Caribbean and Pakistani heritage
- improve the quality of a significant amount of satisfactory and some inadequate teaching that does not engage students, particularly in mathematics
- improve curriculum choice to match the aspirations and needs of all students
- improve the use of data to evaluate the quality of provision
- embed rigorous quality-assurance systems across the school.

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

Attainment is rising quickly. The increase in the proportion of students obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C was steady in 2008 and 2009 but the school's data plus external examination results show the proportion is expected to increase by 20 percentage points on last year. The proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics fell in 2008 and although it increased in 2009 it failed to reach the 2007 figure by one percentage point. An increase of seven percentage points is expected this year. Further improvements are forecast for 2011 when the full benefit of the new curriculum will be felt. The school's data also show an improvement in performance at Key Stage 3.

Students' progress is improving quickly. Analysis of 2009 data shows that lower-ability students in Year 11 and those from Black Caribbean and Pakistani backgrounds made progress in line with similar students elsewhere. Lower-ability boys, however, made comparatively poor progress. Current tracking data and inspection evidence show that all groups of students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, are making satisfactory or better progress. This reflects the more responsive curriculum, better support and successful intervention strategies.

Leaders have reduced the amount of inadequate teaching by providing effective support and taking other action where necessary. The school's assessment of the quality of teaching is accurate and shows that the proportion of good teaching is increasing. In the better lessons teachers are using short, sharp tasks to keep students focused and skilled questioning to test understanding. In less effective lessons activities are more mundane and questioning lacks sharpness. Teaching in mathematics is much improved.

There have been significant improvements to the curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 that have had a positive impact on students' achievement. For example, the introduction of a vocational business course has contributed to the improved motivation and performance of many Pakistani boys.

The use of data is much improved. Reports are very clear and colour-coded to highlight strong performance and possible areas of weakness. Leaders and teachers use reports on students' progress regularly to pinpoint areas of concern and take swift action. Leaders understand and use the data well to evaluate and improve the quality of provision.

Quality assurance is much more systematic and rigorous. Good, clear guidance is given to staff leading to an increased sense of purpose and accountability. Governors are becoming more involved but their role is still underdeveloped.

The headteacher, new at the time of the last inspection, has injected a new purpose, optimism and energy into the school. He has built a very strong and focused senior leadership team with clear roles and lines of responsibility. Care, guidance and support for students have been strengthened, leading to very notable reductions in the number of exclusions and persistent absentees. Development plans are well

considered, cleverly staged and closely monitored. The constant drive for improvement is very skilfully balanced against reductions in staffing and work to reduce a forecast deficit budget. Very effective strategies and systems are in place and the pace of improvement is increasingly rapid.

The school has had sound support from the local authority, especially with regard to recent financial planning to reduce the budget deficit, and from the National Strategies team.

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

Jan Bennett  
Her Majesty's Inspector