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Mr Andrew Bayston
Principal
Harrogate High School
Ainsty Road
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Dear Mr Bayston

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when Les Schubeler, Additional Inspector, and I inspected your school on 12 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during our visit. Please pass on my thanks to those staff who met with us and to those students who assisted by ensuring that we got to lessons so promptly.

As a result of the inspection on 13–14 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to increase the proportion of good or better lessons.
- Review the curriculum to ensure that it fully meets the needs and interests of all students and develops their independent learning skills.
- Improve students' attainment, especially at Key Stage 3 and in mathematics.
- Improve attendance.
- Improve communication with parents and carers.

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has risen since the previous inspection. The percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE and equivalent has been significantly above the national average for the past two years



An analysis of school-held data indicates that students are on track to match this level of performance. The percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades (including English and mathematics) at GCSE has increased considerably since 2008 and, while it is below the national average, it is now not significantly so. Results at GCSE, including in functional English and mathematics, have also markedly improved since May 2008. Students' progress in mathematics is not as good as in other subjects. However, improved leadership and teaching in the department, particularly over the past 16 months, are now beginning to raise standards. Records of teachers' assessments clearly show that students in Key Stage 3 are making better progress than at the time of the previous inspection. This is supported by lesson observations during the visit in which good progress was invariably noted.

Students are achieving well because the quality of teaching has improved. During the inspection almost all of the lessons observed were of good quality with some being outstanding. The leadership team has invested in good-quality professional development, drawing on expertise in the school to good effect. Good use of assessment to match tasks to students' needs, good relationships, good subject knowledge and high expectations are aspects of teaching observed in all lessons. However, the most striking feature is the high level of students' involvement during lessons. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and engage positively with the teacher and their peers. As a result, they are motivated to learn and this is having a positive effect on progress. 'Student Voice', an initiative that seeks students' views about effective teaching and learning, is making a powerful contribution to the process of improving the school.

Significant improvement has been made to the curriculum, especially in regard to ensuring that the learning needs of all students are met. Flexible arrangements are in place to enable students to follow a wide variety of courses and gain a range of appropriate qualifications. In particular, the growth of vocational courses is opening up opportunities to many students. The school's specialist status contributes well to curriculum development. The physical education department is pioneering the introduction of diploma courses. It is also driving assessment for learning throughout the school as well as promoting the use of the virtual learning environment to enhance learning.

Persistent absence has fallen by 6% over two years. The school is confident that the next academic year will see a further reduction as the number of exclusions fall. The school has worked hard to improve attendance. This aspect of the school improvement plan is well managed and initiatives involve staff, students, and parents and carers. The appointment of an attendance officer who has direct contact with parents and carers has proved to be instrumental in improving punctuality and attendance. Good progress has been made in improving communication with parents and carers. Parents' meetings and celebrations of students' successes are regular features of school life. A parents' forum has been established that serves to listen to parents' and carers' views as well as involving them in the process of improving the



school. The leadership team is keen to enlighten parents and carers as to what the school is doing for their children and to offer support and guidance so students may achieve their potential.

The school's good progress in demonstrating a good capacity for improvement is evident in its accurate and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of its work, improved performance in examinations and improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. The senior leadership team has addressed issues from the previous inspection well. A strong sense of collective responsibility exists and this underpins the process of planning improvement. Senior leaders are not complacent; they have a good understanding of areas that require further improvement and plans are in place to tackle these, including a plan to raise attainment in mathematics further, for example. The monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures with specific reference to the single central record which was found to meet current requirements. The local authority continues to monitor the work of the school. The school has benefited from good advice and support regarding attendance and inclusion.

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

Christopher Keeler
Her Majesty's Inspector