

Special measures: monitoring of Scalby School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 March 2009

Evidence

During the monitoring inspection, inspectors scrutinised a range of documents and examined examples of students' work in all year groups. Inspectors also visited 33 lessons, four tutor periods and a Year 8 assembly. Meetings were held with the executive principal and the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teaching staff, support staff, students, the vice chair of the IEB, and the local authority representative who is also the school improvement partner. A telephone discussion was held with the chair of the IEB. Informal discussions were held with students around the school and at social times.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in March 2009, the special educational needs coordinator has resigned and there has been a change in the leadership of the modern foreign languages department. The governing body has been replaced with an IEB.

Achievement and standards

In 2008, standards overall were significantly below average. Key performance measures, including the number of students who attained five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics, continued to decline, with significant levels of underachievement evident. Standards in English were exceptionally low and were significantly below average in mathematics.

Currently, the school's assessment information indicates that the percentage of Year 11 students achieving five GCSE A* to C grades will rise following examinations taken this summer. A greater proportion of students are also on track to achieve this measure when English and mathematics are included. If achieved, the latter indicator would be closer to the national average than in previous years.

Improved GCSE A* to C results are predicted in most specialist subjects. However, with the exception of information and communication technology (ICT), the school indicates that outcomes in a number of areas, including electronics, are not yet likely to reach expected targets. At Key Stage 3, the school's assessment information indicates improvements particularly in English at both expected and higher levels since the previous monitoring inspection.



Senior leaders have introduced a whole-school assessment system to monitor how well students are on course to meet their targets. Detailed information, held by subject departments, is now regularly used to inform the school's judgements on student performance. This has ensured that both subject leaders and teaching staff now have a more accountable role in assessing and tracking students' progress. The whole-school system is effectively used by both senior and middle leaders to provide focused academic and personal support for both individuals and groups, while also recognising students who are achieving well.

Progress since the previous visit on the area for improvement:

- Ensure better achievement across subjects, especially English and mathematics – **satisfactory**.

Personal development and well-being

Improvements in behaviour seen at the previous monitoring inspection have been consolidated. Behaviour is now satisfactory. The use of the 'consequences' system is helping to ensure a more consistent approach to behaviour management in lessons. Students are starting to take responsibility for their own learning and they report that any poor behaviour is effectively dealt with. Rewards and sanctions are generally well understood.

Around the school, senior leaders are continuing to informally visit lessons, with a visible presence on corridors during the day and at social times. Inspectors saw little evidence of unsatisfactory behaviour. Students are generally polite and positive relationships are evident in lessons and around the school.

Since the previous monitoring visit, fixed-term exclusions have declined and there have been no permanent exclusions. The school is gradually moving to a position where specific categories of misbehaviour are now progressively being targeted to further reduce any inappropriate behaviour.

The school is continuing to implement strategies which are improving both attendance and punctuality to school. Attendance is now broadly in line with the national average.

Progress since the previous visit on the area for improvement:

- Improve the unacceptable behaviour of the significant minority of students – **good**.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning remains similar to that seen at the previous monitoring inspection. Teaching staff continue to receive effective training and support to improve classroom practice and together with support staff, they are working vigorously to raise standards. This work, together with an improvement in students' attitudes to learning, is helping to securely underpin ongoing developments in teaching and learning.

In the most successful lessons, teachers' effective use of assessment is a key feature. This was particularly evident in a French lesson seen during the inspection. Planning and delivery are closely matched to students' ability levels, with targeted questioning used to further develop and challenge students' thinking and understanding. This work is further supported by high quality marking in students' workbooks, which fully reflects expectations in the lesson. Students clearly enjoy these lessons, relishing the opportunity to participate fully in the learning process. As a result, they make excellent progress. Where students have fewer opportunities to engage in their learning either through extended teacher direction or where work is not sufficiently challenging, progress slows.

As at the previous monitoring inspection, marking remains inconsistent across the school. Although there is regular marking in most workbooks, the quality varies between subjects, year groups and classes. There are, however, good examples of detailed feedback which effectively supports students' learning and their understanding of how to improve further.

Although at an early stage, the school is starting to improve technical facilities to support learning, for example in music. The school is also beginning to strengthen through restructuring specialist school leadership, and procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the specialism are developing. However, the full impact of the status on improving examination results in specialist and other subjects, together with its work within the wider community, is yet to be realised. The school is fully aware of the urgent need to improve outcomes and further promote the specialism through the appropriate use of specialist funding.

Progress since the previous visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching so it enables students to learn more effectively – **satisfactory**.
- Improve the impact of the specialist status across the school – **satisfactory**.



Leadership and management

The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, is effectively ensuring that developments in all key areas are continuing to improve at pace and is starting to build leadership capacity across the school. Since the previous monitoring inspection, the school has extended and strengthened leadership roles, giving leaders at all levels opportunities to accelerate improvements while developing a greater understanding of whole school issues. This is particularly evident in the new responsibilities of 'associate', 'developing' and 'aspiring' leaders.

Middle leaders, through a more focused involvement in self-review and monitoring procedures, are further developing their skills in evaluating the impact of their actions on improving teaching and learning and tracking students' progress. They have a growing confidence in their strategic role; to consolidate and improve their effectiveness further, a planned programme of leadership training will take place during the next academic year.

The school is continuing to put in place systems and structures, for example whole-school assessment procedures, which provide a framework to support improvement. Alongside regular informal observations by senior and middle leaders, the school has started to formally monitor classroom practice. School personnel are generally positive about the actions which have been taken in recent months. The school's development plan continues to focus sharply on the impact of actions taken. Targets in key areas are now in line with those of the local authority.

Senior leaders have completed a comprehensive review of the curriculum and related staff structure, in readiness for the next academic year. As a result, the school has already secured a significant reduction in the deficit budget; financial projections indicate that the school is now on course to achieve a balanced budget. The school fully recognises that, after a significant period of underinvestment, development of the school's infrastructure and the specialist status are still required.

The governing body has been replaced with an interim executive board. The board brings considerable additional expertise to both support and challenge the school. Through regular meetings with the school's leadership team, the board has already started to closely monitor the impact of the school's work on all key issues for improvement.

Progress since the previous visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure leaders at all levels, including governors, rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the school so they understand and take the actions necessary to increase the rate of improvement – **satisfactory**.
- Significantly reduce the deficit budget – **good**.

External support

The school improvement partner continues to monitor the school's rate of progress with accurate and regular reviews. As at the previous monitoring inspection, further external support is primarily provided by the National Leader in Education. This level of support remains high, but appropriate, as the impact is continuing to strengthen the school's capacity for improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the use of assessment information to significantly increase the proportion of lessons that are consistently good or better.