

Special measures: monitoring of Scalby School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 March 2009

Evidence

During the monitoring inspection, inspectors scrutinised a range of documents and examined students' work in lessons. They also observed an assembly and three tutor periods; 36 part-lessons were seen. Meetings were held with the executive Principal and the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teaching staff, learning mentors, students, the acting chair of the IEB, and a representative from the local authority (LA) who is also the school improvement partner. Informal discussions were also held with students around the school and at social times.

Context

Since the school became subject to special measures, the temporary headteacher, in post since September 2008, has now returned to her school. Since the end of January, the school has been led by an executive Principal and a headteacher.

Achievement and standards

Students enter the school having attained average results in their primary schools. Although, the proportion of students attaining five A* to C GCSE grades increased in 2008, this figure remained significantly below the national average. Notably, the number of students attaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, declined significantly and standards in English were exceptionally low. Results in a number of specialist subjects including design technology and information and communication technology also remained well below average. The significant gap between students' overall standards, as measured against the national average, continued to widen in 2008.

The current picture, however, is one of improvement since the previous inspection. A more consistent approach to managing students' behaviour has resulted in more students making better progress in lessons.

The school has set challenging targets. Assessment information, based on coursework and modular test results indicates that Year 11 students are on track to attain results in English and mathematics which would be closer to the national average in 2009. If achieved, this would represent a significant improvement and indicate satisfactory progress in these subjects. This work is further supported through carefully targeted intervention programmes for students in both Years 10 and 11. The school has also introduced new Key Stage 4 courses, including Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) sport, to increase students' motivation and ensure a greater number are able to attain five GCSE A* to C passes.



The school is monitoring the progress of younger students, albeit presently not with the same urgency as those in Key Stage 4. Students in Year 9 are broadly on track to meet their targets in mathematics and science.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2008:

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

Personal development and well-being

The school has introduced a whole-school behaviour policy and a system of escalating sanctions, presently in use in Years 7, 8 and 10, to improve behaviour in lessons. These systems provide clear expectations and ensure a consistent approach to behaviour across the school. Senior leaders are highly visible around the school; they visit lessons regularly and rigorously monitor students' behaviour.

As a result, behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. In lessons and around the school, staff feel they have procedures which support their efforts to manage discipline. In lessons, relationships are generally positive and the vast majority of students cooperate readily with teachers. Students report that better behaviour is starting to have an impact on the quality of lessons. Movement around the school, between lessons and at social times is orderly and well supervised.

Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The school's coherent and robust approach to both attendance and punctuality is already showing signs of success, with a significant reduction in students arriving late to school and improved attendance overall. The school is continuing to develop closer links with parents generally and those students with a history of poor attendance, or who are already persistent absentees, are monitored closely by the learning mentor team.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2008:

- Improve the unacceptable behaviour of the significant minority of students – **satisfactory**

Quality of provision

The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers have benefited from the regular training they have received and all lessons have a common planning format and clear learning objectives. Behaviour is generally well managed, with clear parameters set and sanctions applied using the 'consequences' system, where needed.

During the monitoring inspection, inspectors observed no inadequate lessons and both good and outstanding practice was seen. Where teaching is most effective, lessons are characterised by teachers' high expectations and by confident classroom management. In these lessons, teachers use skilful targeted questioning to extend and develop students' thinking and assess their understanding. Tasks are well matched to students' different learning needs and engage and sustain students' interest. Opportunities for discussion in pairs and groups are also evident. Consequently, students have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work further to reach higher levels. However, this practice is not consistent across the school. There is still too much teaching which fails to fully engage and sustain students' interest. Key factors in these lessons are slow pace with extended teacher input, lengthy whole-class question and answer sessions and work not well matched to students' ability levels. As a result, some students lose interest or demonstrate indifferent attitudes to learning.

The quality of marking and written feedback in workbooks remains variable across the school. Examples seen in lessons range from books which were unmarked, to those that provided students with clear targeted information on how to improve further.

Significant investment has been secured to develop vocational provision within the specialist areas and the school is starting to introduce new arrangements to strengthen the leadership and curriculum within the specialist subjects. These include the restructuring of subject departments within a faculty structure and the requirement that all students study technology at Key Stage 4 from September 2009. However, the responsibility for developing the specialism, together with procedures to monitor and evaluate its impact, are not fully developed.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2008:

- 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 executive Principal and headteacher, in a relatively short period of time, have started to successfully tackle all areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. As a partnership, they provide assertive leadership with a sharp focus on the improvement agenda. Staff have a clear understanding of leaders' expectations and have been well supported through weekly professional development and the introduction of behaviour and assessment systems. There is an emerging sense of teamwork and shared commitment for rapid improvement.

Senior leaders have responded well to the headteacher's high expectations. Their roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and are focused specifically on the key areas for improvement. They are starting to use their complementary skills to work effectively as a team. Middle leaders also have a clearer understanding of their accountability for improvement. They feel well supported and more empowered in their roles.

Expectations, by the headteacher and senior leaders, of what is required and is possible are appropriate and are based on an honest evaluation of the school's present position. This is reflected in the school's current lengthy and detailed development plan, which outlines a range of required actions and some quantified success indicators. The school's evaluation of the impact of its actions to date is broadly accurate.

There is at present no formal monitoring of teaching and learning across the school. However, the school is fully aware of the need to eradicate inadequate practice and ensure all lessons are consistently good or better. Currently lessons are regularly visited informally by members of the senior leadership team. This has led to the introduction of support plans for a small number of teachers. Staff report that they particularly welcome the day-to-day presence of senior leaders in lessons and around the school.

The school has started to address and resolve the significant deficit budget through a comprehensive curriculum review. A revised staff structure is in place and has been agreed with the governing body. Further proposals, including a reduction in supply staff costs, are already starting to have some impact. Arrangements are in place to replace the governing body with an interim executive board. Procedures and systems for the work of the board have yet to be agreed.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2008:

- 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 - **satisfactory**

External support

The local authority (LA) has an accurate view of the school's needs and has moved swiftly to commission a National Leader in Education (NLE) to lead the school. The NLE support school is currently providing significant levels of support, advice and training with a secure focus on building capacity within the school. The LA statement of action is satisfactory. The support plan identifies success criteria and timescales by which the LA can evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the work of the NLE

support school. However, targets set in some key areas do not match those indicated in the school's development plan.

Priorities for further improvement

The school's priorities remain the six areas for improvement recommended in November 2008.