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Mr Ian Robertson
Headteacher
Richmond School
Darlington Road
Richmond
North Yorkshire
DL10 7BQ

Dear Mr Robertson

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Richmond School

Following my visit with Wendy Ripley Her Majesty's Inspector, Paul Welford Additional Inspector, Ros McMullen Additional Inspector and Steven Goldsmith Additional Inspector to your school on 28 and 29 January 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because the Chief Inspector was concerned about aspects of the quality of leadership and management (including governance) and the behaviour and safety of students at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors observed students' behaviour on arrival to school, in lessons and during lunch and break times. Formal and informal discussions were had with students from Years 7 to 13. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, other staff, and members of the interim executive board (IEB) and representatives of the local authority. Meetings and phone conversations were had with a number of parents and 152 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and other school surveys were considered. Inspectors analysed student progress data, attendance records, staff responses to the Ofsted questionnaire and looked at a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, school self-evaluation, minutes of meetings of the IEB, reports of visits by the local authority and the single central record.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leadership and management including governance are good.

The behaviour and safety of students are good.

Context

The school is much larger than the average secondary school. It has a large sixth form. The proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are well below national figures. The number of students who are eligible for pupil premium (which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below the national average. The number of students registered as disabled or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management remain good and this is sustaining the school's effectiveness. Inspectors found good leadership and management from senior and middle leaders and from the interim executive board (IEB). Leaders and managers, including members of the IEB, know the strengths of their school and what the key priorities are. They are sharply focussed on further improving what is already a good school.

They have a very good grasp of how well students are progressing and are taking effective steps to improve achievement further. Despite recent uncertainty and change, leaders and managers remain focused on ensuring that students are helped to reach their potential. Consequently, the achievement of students remains good.

Members of the IEB have a wealth of knowledge and experience. They are proactive in shaping and developing school priorities and have demonstrated a very thorough understanding of their strategic role in the running of the school. They provide good levels of challenge and support. This includes making sure there are clear performance management targets for the headteacher, and evaluating the impact of school actions. The IEB members are keen to be visible and find opportunities to visit the school, meet with parents and those in the community.

Leaders have recognised the need to develop further ways of keeping parents informed about the school's work. As a result, there are now 'Parent Forum' meetings for parents to share their views. An online portal is being developed which enables parents to check on their children's progress, attendance and behaviour. Parents can contact the chair of the IEB with any issues or concerns they may have. The school website includes detailed and informative information from recent IEB meetings.

Behaviour and safety

The overwhelming majority of students arrive at school ready to learn and with the right equipment. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. Many were keen to tell inspectors that they were proud of their school. Students show positive attitudes to learning. They listen well to teacher instructions and work sensibly and often in a mature way. They show good levels of independence and are able to work well with each other.

Last term a small minority of students were arriving to school without the right equipment such as a pen or a pencil. They would sometimes talk when the teacher was trying to teach or would be playing with their mobile phones when they should have been learning. This sometimes led to students not learning as much as they could. Senior leaders quite rightly listened to teacher and student feedback and have acted quickly to tackle this. The newly introduced consequence system expects students to be equipped and ready to learn each and every day. Staff and students report that this has led to lessons running smoothly and allowing students to get on with learning. One Year 11 student commented that the new system was 'tougher but simpler to follow.'

Leaders are working to ensure that all teachers are using the new behaviour system in a consistent and proportionate way by monitoring carefully teachers' implementation of the agreed policy in classrooms. Having refined the school's approach to student sanctions, leaders need to further develop ways of rewarding the vast majority of students who behave well day in, day out.

Students move from lesson to lesson in a calm and orderly manner. They do this despite some narrow corridors and stair wells. They line up sensibly and enter classrooms in a calm manner. Students behave well at lunchtimes and breaks. Following break times students are prompt back to lessons and keen to continue their learning.

Students say they are safe and inspectors agree. Students, including those in the sixth form, show a good understanding of risk, including the dangers of alcohol, drugs and using the internet. They acknowledge that in instances where bullying may occur they are clear who to go to in order for it to be dealt with.

External support

The local authority has spent a considerable amount of time and energy in supporting the school. The steps taken in establishing an effective IEB are having a positive impact. Local authority officers have also provided valuable support in relation to advice regarding human resources and financial matters. On reflection, the local authority rightly highlight that they could have done more to inform parents and the community about the reasons for issuing a warning notice to the former governing body; this could have potentially stopped unhelpful rumours and reassured concerned parents.

Priorities for further improvement

- Take account of information derived from monitoring, and feedback from students and teachers on the new behaviour system in order to refine it further.
- In consultation with staff and students, develop further ways of rewarding good behaviour and attitudes to learning.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services, to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chair of the Interim Executive Board. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector