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Mr C Sampson
Headteacher
Thornton Grammar School
Leaventhorpe Lane
Thornton
Bradford
BD13 3BH

Dear Mr Sampson

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Thornton Grammar School

Following my visit to your school on 20 November 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body and representatives from the local authority. A telephone discussion also took place with the Chair of the Governing Body. The school's improvement plan was evaluated, with supporting documents.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been no staff changes. The governing body has appointed a new vice-chair.

Main findings

Senior leaders have written a clear whole-school plan aimed at improving the school's performance. The plan identifies and prioritises actions that leaders and governors are taking to improve the quality of teaching, and raise achievement in mathematics and in the sixth form. It also includes actions that the governing body is taking so that it can monitor the school's work more closely and better challenge school leaders.

Actions taken by leaders, to date, include a more rigorous approach to checking the quality of lesson planning and the marking of workbooks in mathematics, the introduction of new tutorial programmes for sixth form students to support their independent learning and whole-school, group and individual training for teachers on specific aspects of their work that require improvement. School leaders have monitored the early impact of these actions through, for example, formal lesson observations.

The governing body has moved quickly to review its committee structure. As a result, governors are now better placed to check on a regular basis and with greater rigour the impact of the school's work. Governors have also received specific training on their role in monitoring and challenging further the impact of the school's improvement work.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- improve the whole-school plan to ensure that the impact of the school's actions, particularly to improve the quality of teaching, is checked regularly and can be measured easily by senior leaders and governors
- review the whole-school and department plans for mathematics to ensure that there is a single focused set of actions that can be easily understood by all
- ensure that improving the quality of teaching in the sixth form is given a higher priority in the improvement plan.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Since the previous inspection, the local authority has continued to provide good support, advice and challenge to the school. This is evident through the regular monitoring meetings with school leaders and governors, the focused support for teaching and the deployment of key personnel for English and mathematics. The governing body have also benefited from the training and support services provided by the local authority. A review of the school's work will take place in January 2013.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bradford.

Yours sincerely

Angela Headon

Her Majesty's Inspector