

Suite 22
West Lancashire Investment Centre
Maple View
White Moss Business Park
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566934
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email: gtunnicliffe@cfbt.com



4 November 2010

Mr Andrew Cooper
Principal
Sheffield Park Academy
Beaumont Road North
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S2 1SN

Dear Mr Cooper

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sheffield Park Academy

Following my visit with Stephen Wall and Pankaj Gulab, additional inspectors, to your academy on 2 and 3 November 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This was the fourth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – **satisfactory**

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – **inadequate**

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to discussion with the lead inspector.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the academy's adviser at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Cathryn Kirby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2009

- Increase students' rates of progress in order to raise standards overall and improve their basic skills.
- Enable students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make the progress of which they are capable both academically and in their personal development.
- Ensure lessons offer effective challenge and support for students' different needs by making rigorous use of assessment information.
- Improve behaviour through more effective support and guidance.
- Improve attendance and relationships through more effective support and guidance.
- Build the capacity of the academy to improve by:
 - putting in place an effective structure for leading and managing at all levels
 - sharpening the focus of monitoring and making better use of the information derived from it to secure a consistent drive for improvement.

Special measures: monitoring of Sheffield Park Academy

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 November 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, other senior leaders, teachers, a group of students and a representative of the academy's sponsor.

Context

Since the monitoring inspection in July 2010 the interim principal, appointed by the sponsor in a temporary capacity, has left the academy as planned. The associate principal has taken over as principal. Twenty-two new members of staff joined the academy in September, including a new head of sixth form. A consultant special educational needs coordinator has been seconded to the academy from another secondary school.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The 2010 end of Key Stage 4 examination results represent the academy's strongest performance to date. The proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, exceeded the national challenge target. Around half of 16-year-olds attained a C grade or above in English and around a third did so in mathematics. The performance gap between English and mathematics was considerably wider than that found nationally. Outcomes of vocational courses, including science and information and communication technology (ICT), were stronger than academic ones. Examination performance in the specialism of business studies was disappointing with only one in five entrants gaining a pass grade at GCSE. Success rates on vocational courses in the sixth form show a positive picture of students' achievements. Examination results for AS and A Level show a more variable performance on academic courses and highlight considerable disparity between actual and predicted grades.

Since the last monitoring inspection, a greater emphasis on developing literacy skills is better supporting learning in some lessons. There is still work to be done in order to ensure that support for literacy is firmly embedded across all subjects.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- increase students' rates of progress in order to raise standards overall and improve their basic skills – **satisfactory**.

Other relevant student outcomes

The improving trend in behaviour seen on the previous two monitoring inspections has not been sustained. Inspectors observed more frequent instances of unsatisfactory behaviour. Movement around the academy is generally satisfactory, although signage indicating movement on the left makes little difference to smoothing mass flow in corridors. Inappropriate language, showing disrespect for fellow students and adults was heard in a number of situations, mainly in English, but also in some of the Asian languages spoken by students.

Progress in improving attendance represents a mixed picture. Sixth form attendance is much improved as a result of sharper monitoring and higher expectations from the start of the autumn term. Action taken to reduce persistent absence in Years 7 to 11 has also had a positive impact, although unauthorised absence remains too high. Attendance on the second day of the monitoring inspection was better than at the same point in the summer term. However, inspectors observed 79 students arriving late for morning tutorial, showing punctuality at the start of the day remains a cause for concern. Overall attendance in Years 7 to 11 is low compared to the national average.

The academy is working productively on a number of fronts to ensure that mainstream provision, enrichment activities, and high quality resources and accommodation are used effectively to promote students' personal development.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve behaviour and relationships through more effective support and guidance – **inadequate**
- improve attendance through more effective support and guidance – **satisfactory.**

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has not improved since the last inspection. The proportion of lessons in which students make good progress in their learning is too low. Some teachers plan and deliver lessons which offer good levels of challenge, brisk pace and interesting activities. In these lessons, expectations are high, enjoyment is evident and students make good gains in their learning. This picture is too infrequent. In too large a proportion of lessons, progress is satisfactory rather than good because tasks are often mundane and lack challenge; insufficient checks are made to ensure that all students thoroughly understand the work and opportunities to consolidate learning are missed. Occasionally, when classroom

control is given too great an emphasis at the expense of strategies to establish a constructive rapport, relationships are not conducive to learning.

Improvements in the quality of sixth form provision continue. The autumn term has seen expectations raised further; information, advice and guidance are sharper, as too is the use of performance and tracking data. Closer collaboration with the sister academy is work in progress that is already promoting greater choice for sixth-form students. A thorough review of provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has informed a range of actions being undertaken to improve the pace of learning and progress for this group of students. It is too early to judge success.

At a strategic level, curriculum development is planned coherently and based upon the analysis of outcomes and identified needs. At department level, inspectors observed instances where weak planning for course delivery, rushed implementation or lack of appropriate learning resources compromised quality.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensure lessons offer effective challenge and support for students' different needs by making rigorous use of assessment information – **inadequate**
- enable students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make the progress of which they are capable both academically and in their personal development – **satisfactory**.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The academy is fully staffed for the first time since opening. New arrangements for leadership and management of the sixth form and of provision for students' special educational needs have added capacity for further improvement. The principal and the governing body have rightly turned their attention to strengthening partnerships with other providers and parents and carers, and to forging closer links with the local community. Whilst curriculum development has taken place to strengthen the impact of the business and enterprise specialism on students' academic outcomes, the contribution of the specialism to improving the academy's overall effectiveness is limited.

Senior leaders have a broadly accurate view of the academy's remaining weaknesses. For the purpose of identifying aspects of provision requiring improvement, monitoring is effective. In driving strategies to rectify these shortcomings, it is less so. Consequently, since the last monitoring inspection crucial improvement in the quality of teaching and learning has stalled. Senior leaders and the academy's sponsor recognise the urgent need to refocus their efforts in the classroom to ensure that attainment is improving strongly and learning and progress are improving securely and quickly.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- build the capacity to improve by putting in place effective structures for leading and managing at all levels – **satisfactory**
- build the capacity to improve by sharpening the focus of monitoring and making better use of the information derived from it to secure a consistent drive for improvement – **inadequate.**

External support

The academy's sponsor continues to provide effective support to the sixth form during the period of transition to new leadership. Since the last monitoring inspection, swift steps have been taken by the sponsor's representative to strengthen the capacity for improvement of provision for students' special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, at this critical point in the academy's journey out of special measures, the frequency of office-based management activity needs review by the sponsors, together with the academy's staff, in order to maximize the time available for senior leaders to work directly with students, teachers and middle leaders.