

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: gtunncliffe@cftb.com



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Mr Paul Eckersley
Headteacher
Selby High School Specialist School for the Arts
Leeds Road
Selby
North Yorkshire
YO8 4HT

Dear Mr Eckersley

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Selby High School Specialist School for the Arts

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Bernard Campbell HMI on 15 October 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and the on-site planning meeting, and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the students and staff who met with us during the visit.

Since the last inspection there has been significant staffing change in both the English and mathematics departments.

As a result of the inspection on 4 and 5 February 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The proportion of students gaining five good grades at GCSE has continued to rise in line with the national trend. However, improvements in the proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics are more modest and results in this respect are still below the school's target. Students' progress in mathematics is improving but the school rightly recognises that more needs to be done to accelerate students' progress further in both mathematics and English.

Progress seen in the large majority of lessons observed was good. Students demonstrate a willingness to share their thoughts and ideas when questioned or

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when working in small groups because there is a positive climate for learning in classrooms. Students are increasingly well motivated and challenged by teachers' use of a wider range of learning activities, engaging contexts and interesting resources. Similarly their growing commitment to achieving their best is reflected in their increasing willingness to attend additional sessions, in mathematics for example, prior to examinations.

The tracking of students' progress is more robust and students receive frequent feedback on whether they are on course to achieve their targets. Staff have a much greater awareness of students' expected progress and of their responsibility to ensure that all individuals achieve well. However, the school recognises the need to refine current systems to ensure that projections of what students are on track to achieve are more accurately matched with final GCSE outcomes. There is a much greater focus on tracking the performance of different groups. Students at risk of underachieving are being identified more swiftly and a broad range of support is helping to accelerate their progress. Students receiving additional support say it is effective.

There has been a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching since the inspection and good use has been made of external support, particularly in helping newly qualified colleagues to develop their practice. Teachers' ability to assess students' current level of attainment accurately is improving in English and mathematics and teachers are beginning to make more effective use of this assessment data to inform their planning. All lessons include a range of learning objectives with an increasing degree of challenge but teachers' use of learning outcomes to assess and support students' progress remains inconsistent.

The curriculum has been revised and developments are making an effective contribution to students' increasing rates of progress. For example, a fast-track GCSE option in mathematics has been introduced and provides a good degree of challenge for higher-attaining students and the opportunity to gain an additional qualification. Lower-attaining students in Year 7 are benefiting from a specialised curriculum which helps them get off to a good start in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. The school's specialist arts status continues to make a very effective contribution to students' personal development, enjoyment and achievement within the arts, as recognised by the school recently gaining the Artsmark Gold award.

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the reasons underpinning the current variation in performance between subjects and groups and have made a secure start in dealing with the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They have been successful in strengthening provision in English and mathematics by using creative solutions to tackle recruitment difficulties and have provided additional specialist staffing to enhance the progress of targeted groups. Senior and middle leaders are discussing student progress more frequently and this is helping to ensure that students' underperformance is being more effectively

addressed. The positive impact of work done to improve the quality of teaching is clearly reflected in rising attainment and is recognised by students.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Gueli
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards and achievement in mathematics to match those in science.
- Ensure consistency in the use of information about students' attainment to inform the planning of lessons, so they better target individual learning.