

Tribal Education
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 12331231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01527 579342
Direct F 01527 579342
peter.limm@ofsted.gov.uk

12 November 2010

Ms K Curtis
The Headteacher
Wheatley Park School
Holton
Oxford
OX33 1QH

Dear Ms Curtis

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Wheatley Park School

Following my visit with Lynne Kauffman, Additional Inspector, and Michael Lafford, Additional Inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 November 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – good.

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 governors and the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Wheatley Park School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 November 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of students, the chair and vice-chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, there has been a strengthening of the leadership team. A new deputy headteacher and a coordinator for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities took up their appointments in September. An assistant headteacher has returned from maternity leave. There are new roles for other leadership team members with three heads of school and an assistant headteacher for curriculum. There are new members of the governing body. There is a new leadership structure in the arts faculty.

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

The school has consolidated well on its previous actions to improve attainment and its work to address underachievement is beginning to have a positive impact in Key Stage 3 and the current Year 11. Learning and progress in lessons have improved, although progress is still slow in some lessons. The school's better tracking and assessment procedures are leading to more focused interventions for those students identified as needing extra support to achieve their targets, and these students are beginning to make better progress. Other developments introduced by the school to boost learning and progress since the previous visit, such as the excellent lesson planner booklets, are helping teachers to increase the rate of progress. In some cases there has not yet been sufficient time for departments to demonstrate that progress in the medium to long term is improving consistently well across the school. Unvalidated performance data indicate that 59% of students attained 5 A* to C passes in GCSE including English and mathematics in 2010. This confirmed an improving attainment trend since 2007 so that attainment is now broadly average. This represents good progress in improving attainment since the inspection in 2009 and also demonstrates the accuracy of the school's predictions and target-setting procedures. In the sixth form, the students studying for GCSE qualifications continue to make good progress following better interventions and more rigorous tracking of student progress.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- increase the rate of progress made by students taking GCSE courses in the sixth form and in other less well performing groups in the main school – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The school's initiatives to improve behaviour in lessons and around the school have successfully established clear expectations about the consequences of behaviour that disrupts learning. There is now a good climate for learning. The new learning zones initiative links teaching and learning with behaviour and teachers are beginning to be more consistent in how they manage incidents of low level disruption in lessons. The new red zone is designed as an alternative to exclusion and the school can demonstrate that exclusions have fallen markedly over recent months. Students are positive about these changes. They report that there is a much calmer environment for learning than was apparent in 2009. The emphasis on praise and rewards and reducing the use of sanctions where they are inappropriate have also supported well the zoning concept. Good school consultation with students is leading to an honest self review of the impact of provision and the school does not shy away from adverse student comments. This is being increasingly valued by students who feel their voice is being heard and acted upon where possible. The school has restructured its support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and there are good new procedures for ensuring that students requiring extra support get the right kind of guidance and challenge to make better progress. The school continues to deal well with the very few recorded racist incidents.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- eradicate the incidence of disruptions to learning by managing more effectively the behaviour of students who are not engaged – good.

The effectiveness of provision

The more rigorous monitoring of lessons is continuing to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors observed ten lessons and five part-lessons. Teaching was judged to be good or better in eleven lessons, although only two were outstanding. As last time, one was inadequate. However, the work of the leaders for teaching and learning, student achievement, and assessment is now being consolidated well across the school, although further time is required for the newest developments to be embedded effectively. Heads of faculty and year monitor the quality of teaching effectively and address issues of weaker teaching within their areas more robustly. The processes for tracking students' attainment and progress have provided teachers with better evidence about where improvements still need to be made to ensure all students achieve as well as they should. Subject evaluation is developing well across the school and now more effectively in Key Stage 3 than on the previous visit. Good practice is being shared better across the school by whole-school teaching and learning groups. The new lesson planning format, with its increased focus on learning objectives and learning activities, is helping to engage students more in their learning, increase progress and address incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Teachers are keeping their lesson plans in book format which demonstrate how learning is developing. Some staff use cards for evaluations

which show how students are responding to feedback. These practices and have reduced the previous confusion or misunderstanding on the part of some teachers about the distinction between lesson activities and learning activities and objectives.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure that teaching meets the needs of all students and that lessons are consistently challenging with sharply focused objectives for learning – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the last visit the leadership team has been restructured and strengthened. This change has addressed the uncertainties surrounding the school's capacity to sustain improvements existing at the time of the previous visit, and is beginning to have a positive impact on improving student achievement. The headteacher is now much better placed to focus on her strategic role within the school and to ensure that leadership and management across the school are better placed to drive forward improvements consistently and successfully. As a consequence, faculty and middle leaders continue to gain in confidence and develop their leadership roles, although it is too early for some departments to demonstrate the full impact of recent changes. The governing body has strengthened its accountability role and now challenges the school well on areas of identified weakness. As a consequence, school targets are appropriately challenging and increasingly ambitious. The head of sixth form and his two assistant heads have made good progress in addressing the issues of underachievement and have consolidated on good procedures identified last time. The school's specialist status in media arts continues to have a positive impact on achievement and curriculum provision.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensure the school meets statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding and equality – good.

External support

The school continues to work well with a range of partners to improve outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning. The local authority has amended its support sensibly to meet the changing needs of the school. It recognises that the school can now drive forward improvements much more confidently on its own. It has undertaken good work with the school to review developments in leadership and management and to support the school's work. A further review by the national strategies behaviour team also helped the school focus well on reviewing the impact of its behaviour policies and procedures.