

CfBT Inspection Services T 0300 1231231  
Suite 22 [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
West Lancs Investment Centre [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)  
Maple View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

Direct T 01695 566934  
Direct F 01695 729320  
[gtunncliffe@cfbt.com](mailto:gtunncliffe@cfbt.com)  
[www.cfbt-inspections.com](http://www.cfbt-inspections.com)



21 January 2011

Mrs L Abercromby  
Headteacher  
Windlehurst School  
Windlehurst Road  
Hawk Green  
Marple  
Stockport  
Cheshire  
SK6 7HZ

Dear Mrs Abercromby,

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Windlehurst School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 20 January 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to staff and students for their help and for making me welcome.

There has been a significant turnover of teachers, with only four of the ten teachers in place at the time of the previous inspection still employed. Two teachers are absent and there are temporary teachers in their place. Following the relocation of Key Stage 4 students in September 2009 to a site next to Stockport College, further accommodation on separate sites has been added to provide for the 16 students on roll. In addition to the bungalow adjacent to the college, the school has a room in the college. Further accommodation has been found with the Youth Offending Team and at a youth centre.

As a result of the inspection on 23 September 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.

Students' achievement is satisfactory. In Key Stage 4, the majority achieve in National Vocational Qualifications at Level 1, BTEC and other courses at Stockport College. In school, all pass adult literacy and numeracy tests and some pass GCSE examinations in English and mathematics, BTEC science and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network's Silver and Bronze awards. Students in Key Stages 3 and 4 are reasonably settled and cooperative; as a result they learn and make progress satisfactorily. Students who have been at the school for longest have noticeably more positive attitudes. Behaviour at Key

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Stage 3, including outside the classroom, has improved. However, attendance at Key Stage 3 and 4, while improving, is low and this adversely affects the rate of progress.

Leaders have introduced initial assessments in all subjects for all students when they arrive at the school; this at an early stage of development. Key Stage 2 and 3 test results from students' previous schools are collected and, together with the initial assessments, form the starting point for predicting future attainment and tracking progress. Data are set out clearly in a chart which allows the school to identify underachievement. A commercial software program for analysing the school's data is being installed which gives the school the advantage of comparing it with other similar schools. A senior member of staff has responsibility for data handling and monitoring progress, although this role is relatively new. A link has been started with a special school in Bolton to share their knowledge and skills in monitoring progress. The steps so far taken by leaders to improve monitoring students' progress have established systematic procedures for generating the data the school needs. At present, the amount of data are limited and both teachers and leaders are learning effectively how to make best use of data to raise standards further.

Lessons seen and scrutiny of lesson plans and individual education plans show that assessment and information from students' statements are now incorporated in planning. Lesson plans show that teachers engage in assessing the likely outcomes for each student and in setting expectations for lessons. However, there is variation in the skill with which teachers use assessment to set tasks closely matching students' abilities. Sometimes activities are the same for all students in the class whatever their capability. This limitation in planning also affects how teachers deploy learning support assistants. Without the sharp focus on what should be expected from each student and what support this might entail, support assistants are underused. They were well briefed to support in a Year 9 mathematics lesson and in Key Stage 4 help for individual students is more clearly defined for learning support assistants.

Senior leaders are effective and they have persevered in the face of staff turbulence and the complex Key Stage 4 accommodation issues. Leaders' determination in the face of these barriers to improvement has increased the school's capacity for further improvement. The staff team is cohesive and its members are clear about what is needed to continue to improve. At Key Stage 4, this offsets the difficulties of split-site accommodation. Improvement planning is now a more rational prioritisation of key areas of development. It is still more the headteacher's plan than owned by the school and its stakeholders but, increasingly, others play their part in its realisation. The link with the school in Bolton is aimed at developing subject leadership and support the improvement of teaching.

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  
Mr Alan Lemon  
**Additional Inspector**

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## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 23 September 2009**

- Implement assessment strategies that provide clear information about students' attainment and progress.
- Use assessment data better to plan lessons and when setting targets for students in their individual education plans.
- Ensure that more effective use is made of learning support assistants.
- Improve students' behaviour outside of lessons in Key Stage 3.
- Continue to set priorities through the school improvement plan and ensure that targets for improvement are as concise as possible.