

CfBT Inspection Services T 0300 1231231
Suite 22 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
West Lancs Investment Centre www.ofsted.gov.uk
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

Direct T 01695 566934
Direct F 01695 729320
gtunncliffe@cfbt.com
www.cfbt-inspections.com



19 March 2011

Mr I Hutcheon
Head of Centre
Ashdale
Sulby Avenue
Middlesbrough
Teesside
TS3 8RD

Dear Mr Hutcheon,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Ashdale

Following my visit to your school on 17 and 18 March 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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 – good

Progress since 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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Middlesbrough.

Yours sincerely

Dr Andrew Johnson
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011



Annex

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

- Raise the quality of leadership and management to a suitable standard by:
 - improving self-evaluation by developing more comprehensive ways of measuring progress and improvement against which the effectiveness of the centre can be judged
 - evaluating the impact of action taken to bring about improvement.

- Raise attendance by:
 - improving the management of behaviour
 - reducing the use of exclusion by 50% over the next term so that it is used as a final sanction rather than an everyday occurrence.

- Improve teaching and learning by raising expectations and improving teachers' skills in managing behaviour in lessons.

Special measures: monitoring of Ashdale

Report from the third monitoring inspection from 17 to 18 March 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work and visited three partner organisations that provide placements for students. He observed four lessons, scrutinised documents and met the head of the complementary education service from the local authority and the chair of the management committee.

Context

Ashdale supports students in Years 10 and 11 who have a wide range of social, behavioural and emotional difficulties. Many of the students have been permanently excluded and most have not made satisfactory progress in their English and mathematics skills. The centre has 40 places, although at the time of this visit 52 students were on its register. This is more than at the last monitoring inspection; in particular more students are registered at the school as a result of long periods of non-attendance in mainstream schools. A small minority attend because of medical conditions or other circumstances which make them vulnerable. Two-thirds of students are boys and many transfer to Ashdale having spent time in the local Key Stage 3 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). Two students registered at the school are in custody of a young offender's institution and one is seeking asylum. Seven students are in the care of the local authority. Many students were identified in their previous school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities and three students have a statement of special educational needs; two have been excluded from a local special school.

The temporary teacher-in-charge of Ashdale at the time of the previous monitoring inspection has taken up the role of head of centre on a permanent basis. He is also responsible for the leadership of the Key Stage 3 PRU situated on the same site. Two teachers have been absent due to sickness since the previous monitoring inspection and their work is being covered by qualified teachers from a supply agency. The move to new, purpose-built premises has been completed. A staffing restructure is underway as part of a wider restructuring of the complementary education service, due to be completed by 1 September 2011.

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

Students' behaviour, progress and the extent they enjoy their learning have improved significantly since the last monitoring inspection. This was exemplified in a lesson in which students made a three course meal for staff and students that was served at lunchtime and enjoyed by all. In the other lessons observed, most students made good progress in their knowledge and understanding, although levels of attainment remained low. Analysis of progress carried out by the school indicates increased proportions are on track to attain a

good grade at GCSE in mathematics and English in 2011. Most students who attend external providers are predicted to attain a variety of level 1 and, in a few cases, level 2 vocational qualifications.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Students behaved well during the monitoring visit. They were looking forward to participating in 'Red-nose day' and those who attended the breakfast club started the day well. The number of fixed-term exclusions has been significantly reduced since the last inspection. There are still occasions when behaviour is poor but the new behaviour management system has reduced the frequency of serious incidents. Staff have much higher expectations of behaviour and students are responding well. The new uniform policy is having a particularly positive impact on the school's ethos. Students and staff now value Ashdale not only as a place where students can develop social and personal skills, but also where academic learning can take place.

Attendance at the school and external providers is monitored meticulously and accurate data are produced which show a pattern of improvement for many individuals; however, overall attendance remains well below the national average. This figure has been adversely affected recently by the higher proportion of students who are registered at the school as a result of their previous history of persistent absence in mainstream schools. School staff make every effort to work with partners to engage with these young people and their parents or carers but recognise that in many cases their efforts have little impact.

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

- raise attendance by improving the management of behaviour – good
- reduce the exclusion rate by 50% over the next term so that it can be used as a final sanction rather than an everyday occurrence – good

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve. Results of a recent school survey indicate that the majority of students and their parents or carers agree that behaviour has improved, consequently, students are in a better position to learn and make good progress during lessons.

In most lessons, class sizes are very small and there is potential for teachers to focus on personalising learning for individual students. Lesson plans contain extensive details of the intended learning outcomes, learning styles, individual support needs and approaches to learning. Despite this, on a few occasions teachers adopt a whole-class approach to teaching that is less successful in meeting individual students' needs. Marking is done frequently and students generally take pride in the quality of their work. Students are often supported by staff on an individual basis. Pastoral support is effective, however, occasionally students are provided with insufficient guidance on how they could improve academically, particularly in spelling. Students' abilities and aptitudes are accurately assessed when they

join the school. Often assessment indicates that students have made very little progress in their secondary careers and in some cases appear to have regressed. However, this information is not always used well to set realistic, ambitious targets.

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

- improve teaching and learning by raising expectations and improving teachers' skills in managing behaviour in lessons – good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new head of centre and head of complementary education have established a more-positive and ambitious approach to most aspects of the school's work. This, together with the move to the new, purpose-built school, has had a very positive impact and improved outcomes for students. It is too early to judge the improvement to attainment, however, data provided by the centre indicate that students' progress in English and mathematics are much better. Initiatives are planned to develop better partnership working and a broader curriculum. The single central record of safeguarding checks shown to the inspector complies with current government regulations.

A comprehensive self-evaluation of the school's work has been carried out; this informs the long-term vision for its future and the local authority's wider plans for the complementary education service. However, a few gaps remain, for example, there is insufficient clarity regarding the school's specific role in meeting the long-term needs of students with statements of special educational needs or those with identified with serious mental health issues.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- improve self-evaluation by developing more comprehensive ways of measuring progress and evaluating the impact of action taken to bring about improvement – good

External support

The local authority has provided high levels of resources and good quality support to the school. The head of the complementary education service works very effectively with the head of centre to drive improvement. It is planned that this arrangement will continue as part of the wider restructure.

Priorities for further improvement

- Establish universally understood targets for those students who have a statement of special educational needs and/or serious mental health issues.