

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



30 June 2011

Mrs H D'Rozario
Headteacher
Don Valley School and Performing Arts College
Jossey Lane
Scawthorpe
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN5 9DD

Dear Mrs D'Rozario,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Don Valley School and Performing Arts College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Derek Barnes, additional inspector, and I inspected your school on 29 June 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and students who met with us and the school's National Challenge Adviser who contributed to the inspection.

In September 2011, the school will convert to academy status, as part of the Schools Partnership Trust.

As a result of the inspection on 17 and 18 March 2010, 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.

In 2010, a modest improvement in attainment at the end of Key Stage 4, in English and mathematics failed to keep pace with the national picture. The trend of low standards in English and mathematics continued. The proportion of students who gained five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, rose to 39%, a figure 15% below the national average. The performance of boys was closer to average. A significant attainment gap was evident for girls in English and mathematics. The school has been more successful in boosting the proportion of students who gained five or more high-grade passes across all subjects. From broadly-average starting points on entry to the school most groups of students made the progress expected when all subjects are taken into account. However, the trend of weak progress in English and mathematics continued with too few students making the levels of progress expected from Key Stage 2.

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Since the inspection crucial steps have been taken to tackle the legacy of underperformance in English and mathematics. Improved staffing stability and the successful recruitment of specialist teachers have supported greater continuity in students' learning. Systems of assessment, tracking and monitoring have been strengthened. The school's robust tracking of students' progress in Year 11, including early entry results, indicates that attainment in English and mathematics will rise this year. Differences between boys and girls have been reduced through a sharper focus on individual needs, supported by one-to-one tuition and mentoring. Outcomes in English are expected to close the gap with national standards. Mathematics remains a school priority despite an encouraging improvement this year.

The focus of the National Challenge initiative has been successfully refined to accelerate rates of students' progress from Year 7. Systems to evaluate progress against challenging targets for individual students at teacher, department and whole school level are now a regular feature for all cohorts. This is raising the expectation of staff and students. Students are familiar with their targets and appreciate opportunities to discuss their learning and progress.

A high priority has been set on improving the quality of teaching through training, coaching and monitoring. There are some good examples of how training has been linked more precisely to teachers' specific needs with follow-up observation to ensure that learning and teaching strategies are embedded in practice. This approach has not been extended to all curriculum areas. In the most effective lessons excellent working relationships are built on a thorough knowledge of students' needs and backgrounds. Good pace is secured by engaging, relevant and well-pitched activities as well as probing questions to inform the next steps in developing knowledge, skills and confidence. The sharing of lesson objectives and success criteria is particularly successful. The use of assessment in the planning and delivery of lessons to deepen and accelerate learning is not consistent. For example, clear objectives are set but not always followed through by provision of a range of tasks tailored to students' differing needs. Low-level disruptive behaviour is a barrier to learning in a small number of lessons. The pace of learning also slows when teachers talk for too long and explanations are unclear. The quality of feedback and marking has improved since the inspection, although it varies between teachers and subjects. Time is not routinely provided for students to respond to teachers' helpful comments to tackle weaknesses or to consolidate their learning.

Students are positive about the improvements made this year in lessons, attendance, punctuality and behaviour. They report that they enjoy most of their lessons and the increased opportunities to work in pairs and small groups. They recognise that opportunities to take responsibility for their learning are increasing through involvement in assessment and access to computer programmes to tackle gaps in their learning. The students' positive attitudes are shown in the significant improvement in attendance to above the national average. Electronic registration is now embedded to support efficient monitoring, analysis and follow-up. Routine analysis of attendance for different groups of students and effective action has reduced the proportion of students who are persistently absent. The performing arts specialism makes a strong contribution to provision through popular enrichment and

cultural activities. It is particularly successful in supporting the transition of younger students and developing the arts in primary schools and the local community.

School leaders have succeeded in building a strong ethos of inclusion and achievement. The school's performance is now carefully analysed so that teachers and middle leaders are held to account for students' progress. This means that all staff are taking responsibility for improving standards. The school is increasingly evaluating the impact of its work through monitoring activities, such as classroom observation, work scrutiny and student interviews. Senior leaders are now devolving more responsibility for monitoring the quality of provision and outcomes to middle leaders to build capacity for sustainable development. Middle leaders in English and mathematics meet regularly to review students' progress and the implications for grouping and additional support. Leaders have identified that evaluations of lesson observations, drop-ins and student progress analysis are not drawn together sufficiently well to provide a co-ordinated approach to improvement. Plans are well advanced to tackle this.

The school has received substantial and effective support and challenge from the National Challenge Adviser. Training has been well received. This has had notable impact in developing the focus on learning and progress, and the use of assessment. Joint observation with senior and middle leaders has promoted consistency and rigor in evaluating teaching.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures by scrutinising the single central record and found this to be secure.

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

Ms Nada Trikić
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 17 and 18 March 2010

- Improve attainment and progress in English and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that all students make at least satisfactory progress
 - increasing the proportion of good teaching
 - ensuring that all mathematics lessons are taught by specialists
 - improving the recruitment and deployment of staff to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use assessment effectively to plan learning that meets students' needs and interests
 - students have increased opportunities to work independently.
- Use assessment more rigorously so that:
 - underachievement is identified early and action taken promptly
 - students understand what they do well and how to improve.
- Improve attendance from low to average.
- Sharpen the analysis of the school's performance in order to:
 - target actions more precisely and strategically
 - bring about sustained and secure improvement
 - demonstrate good progress in the key areas of improvement within one year.