

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566932
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
hcarnall@cfbt.com



8 March 2012

Mr J Hallworth
Executive Headteacher
Washington School
Spout Lane
Washington
Tyne and Wear
NE37 2AA

Dear Mr Hallworth

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Washington School

Following my visit with Clive Petts and Steven Goldsmith, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 6 and 7 March 2012, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures, following the inspection which took place in June 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement, which were identified during that inspection, is 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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 Sunderland.

Yours sincerely

Brian Blake
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2012



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010

- Improve the impact of teaching on students' learning and progress by:
 - eradicating inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and ensuring that teachers always have high expectations of students
 - consistently using assessment and information about students' prior learning to plan work that meets the learning needs of all, particularly the most able
 - ensuring that lessons provide interesting, varied tasks that challenge all students
 - sharing the good practice clearly evident in school
 - ensuring that the behaviour management policy is consistently and fairly applied so boundaries and expectations of students and staff are clear.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - holding middle managers more fully to account for the effective use of assessment information in their areas of responsibility
 - increasing middle managers' role in monitoring the impact of teaching by observing lessons and by reviewing planning and its impact on students' progress
 - reducing staff absence to a minimum
 - developing additional strategies to increase students' attendance rates and to reduce the number of days lost to fixed-period exclusions.

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Washington School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 March 2012

Evidence

The inspectors observed the school's work, including 19 part lessons. A range of documents was scrutinised and meetings were held with members of the senior management team, the Chair of the Governing Body and a senior officer from the local authority. Separate discussions were also held with a number of staff and a group of nominated students. Inspectors spoke with significant numbers of students during lessons over the two days.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in October 2011, new heads of department have been appointed in modern foreign languages and music. Two teachers have recently returned to the school; one from long-term sick leave and the other from maternity leave. Three members of staff, present at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, are now on long-term sick leave. There has been a restructuring of middle management responsibilities which has removed staff responsibility for more than one subject.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's most recent data on the attainment and progress of its students show that through early entry in GCSE examinations, 58% of its current Year 11 have already gained an A* to C grade in English, with 50% gaining A* to C grades in mathematics; this latter figure does not yet include the higher set in mathematics, where all the students are making the expected progress towards an A* to C grade in the subject. Overall, therefore, the school has already closed the gap in its Key Stage 4 English and mathematics performance against last year's national averages. Although the progress in lessons is more variable, it remains exclusively linked to the quality of teaching and the behaviour of the students. The overwhelming majority of students continue to make at least satisfactory progress in lessons, although for a minority it slows down because the lesson content is reinforcing previous learned material rather than extending their knowledge and understanding into new and more challenging areas. The school's recent focus on 'literacy across the curriculum' is having a positive impact on the quality of student's written and oral work, particularly in improving the overall quality of their presentation in books, and in the quality of speaking and listening when the students are working in small groups or whole-class question and answer sessions with the teacher. Although the majority of students are improving the quality of their writing, not all are yet able to write in an extended form, which exemplifies their deeper understanding of a topic.

The quality of teaching

The overall quality of teaching continues to improve because of the focused and ongoing professional development programme for staff, and because of the rigour and challenge that is now being applied by senior leaders and managers to improving teaching across the school. An increasing proportion of teaching is good or better, but there is still a proportion of satisfactory teaching, and a small amount that is inadequate. The consequences of this satisfactory or inadequate teaching are that the students make slower progress than they should because teachers fail to enthuse and fully engage the students in their learning. For a small minority of students whose behaviour is poor, ineffective management of this by teachers means that the lesson is disrupted to the extent that the progress of almost all students is inadequate. In the most effective teaching, the students' motivation, concentration and behaviour are good or better. Additionally, teaching of this quality raises the aspirations of the students to achieve, which also brings about rapid progress in their learning. Teachers are continuing to make good use of assessment information to plan lessons that match the ability of the students, but some teachers are more skilled in knowing when to adapt and change the content and teaching style so that the students' learning is maintained at an appropriate pace. Furthermore, these more skilled teachers are providing timely opportunities for students to gain the skills of learning to learn independently of them. The curriculum access provision (CAP) for those students with identified learning needs is continuing to help them make good progress, from a relatively low starting point.

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

- improve the impact of teaching on students' learning and progress – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school continues to maintain an accurate and updated record of the suitability of all adults who work in or regularly visit the school. Overall attendance remains around average for secondary schools, with the school successfully reducing the year-on-year proportion of its students who are persistent absentees. The number of recorded incidents of disruptive behaviour is continuing to decrease. Detailed records of behavioural incidents are also helping senior staff and class teachers to identify trends in misbehaviour from particular students and intervene quickly. However, there is still a very small minority which is intent on disrupting their own and others' learning. Such behaviour was observed in one lesson during this inspection visit, which was exemplified by a discourteous manner and tone from some students towards the class teacher.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders and managers at all levels are continuing to ensure that there is clarity of vision about the required improvements needed across the school, especially in relation to improving teaching and raising levels of students' attainment as an aid to them achieving

more in line with their identified capability. The school's development plan remains detailed and focused on a range of key areas relating to the improvement areas from the previous inspection. The method of colour rating the progress being made against each separate action in the plan, using a traffic light system, is now positively helping the governing body and senior leaders and managers to assess more accurately whether the rate of progress being made is appropriate or not. As a result, the school's self evaluation of its work is more accurate than previously seen. The governing body has sustained its challenge and support to the school, and the recent involvement of some governors at 'subject challenge meetings' was appreciated by the staff involved, and is now giving a greater emphasis to the professional accountability expected from heads of department. The school recognises, however, that there is a need to improve further the quality of middle management in some subject areas as an aid to improving teaching and raising standards.

Staff absence continues to reduce, alongside higher staff morale about the educational direction of the school, and the quality of professional support received from senior leaders and managers, including the governing body.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- improve leadership and management – satisfactory

External support

The quality of the external support remains of high quality. The local authority's ongoing support work, especially in helping develop leadership and management at all levels and in conducting detailed reviews of the school's provision, has made a positive contribution to the school's progress since being placed in special measures.