

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



14 December 2012

Mrs Maryssa O'Connor
Thornaby Academy
Baysdale Road
Stockton-On-Tees
TS17 9DB

Dear Mrs O'Connor

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Thornaby Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 14 December 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Principal and senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the sponsors. The sponsors' statement of action and the academy's improvement plan were evaluated. The academy's single central record was also reviewed.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the teaching of mathematics has been strengthened by two appointments. At the time of this inspection, the academy had moved into part of the new building and this has given students access to specialist facilities including science laboratories.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

The Principal, supported by senior leaders, has maintained the academy's drive for improvement. Leaders are tackling weaknesses in teaching systematically by putting in place strong programmes of support. They pull no punches in holding teachers to account where teaching is inadequate. Teachers attended training to improve the

way they use progress information to plan lessons within two weeks of the last inspection. They have helpful 'progress packs' to support them in making sure students get consistent and accurate feedback on the quality of their work. Middle leaders are getting better at checking the quality of students' work and the quality of teaching. This is because senior leaders are working closely with them, providing helpful tips on how to make such checks honestly and accurately. Attendance has improved but for some students is lower, especially those who are eligible for pupil premium funding.

The governing body has also taken swift action. Governors often visit the academy and help senior leaders to check on how well attendance and behaviour are improving. Members of the governing body have a clear idea about the strengths and weaknesses in the academy. They ask probing questions and make sure they have all the information they need to help the academy improve quickly.

The academy improvement plan is detailed and highlights the right priorities. It also makes clear exactly what everybody has to do to ensure that improvement is rapid. How improvements will be measured is not always crystal clear, but the plan provides strong direction with the right sense of urgency.

The sponsors have given the academy appropriate support. Academy leaders have particularly valued the work the sponsors have done in helping to develop finely-tuned progression routes for students when they leave the academy. Leaders are improving the way they make sure students have the right kind of preparation for this important next step. The sponsors are building up a bank of expertise on which they can draw to offer the academy more bespoke support to raise achievement. The statement of action offers clear guidance about what the sponsors offer the academy. It also outlines a thorough and systematic programme of checking on the progress the academy is making.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The sponsors' statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt
Her Majesty's Inspector