

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

T 0300 1231231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566863  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:**  
jbennett@cfbt.com



25 September 2013

Mrs C Robinson  
Headteacher  
The Dearne Advanced Learning Centre  
Goldthorpe Road  
Goldthorpe  
Rotherham  
South Yorkshire  
S63 9EW

Dear Mrs Robinson

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of The Dearne Advanced Learning Centre**

Following my visit to your school on 24 September 2013 with Tanya Harber Stuart, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Principal, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the proposed academy sponsor. A telephone call was held with a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan and other documents provided by the school, were evaluated. The Principal took one of Her Majesty's Inspectors on a tour of the school.

### **Context**

A high number of staff left at the end of term. Eight new teachers started in September 2013 including a new vice-principal and an assistant principal. All students now start and finish the school day at the same time. Lessons have been reduced in length and are now an hour long.

There is a proposal that this school becomes an academy sponsored by Navigate Academies Trust with a planned opening in April 2014.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

There is a clear vision from the Principal which has been accepted enthusiastically by senior leaders, staff and governors. This vision is focused on the areas for improvement: developing teaching and leadership; and raising attendance. The school improvement plan is extensive, providing a comprehensive overview of the actions to be taken linked to milestones. There are plans to improve links with the community and specifically with families of children in the school. The school is clear that the next steps are to improve the quality of day-to-day teaching and raise the attainment and achievement of the students. Teachers whose practice is not yet good are provided with individual support packages, including regular and bespoke opportunities for professional development.

Governors are committed to the school and have created a strategy group to monitor the impact of the improvement plan and the local authority statement of action. The governors have been strengthened by the presence of a local authority representative and a representative from the proposed academy sponsor, who are enabling the governors to be more challenging to the senior leaders.

Students have embraced the changes and are aware of higher expectations for learning and behaviour. The school feels calm and well ordered. Representatives from the local authority and the proposed academy sponsor support this view. The number of incidents of disruptive behaviour has decreased significantly and there are early signs that attendance is increasing. The new 'bridge unit' and the ethos and engagement unit are providing students with in-school alternatives to exclusion in a safe and supportive environment and are reducing the need to use other providers to educate some students.

The local authority's statement of action is linked closely to the school improvement plan. The actions to be taken are relevant and provide the school with success criteria to measure progress. However, it is not always clear exactly who is leading and taking responsibility for each action. Some of the support described in the statement of action depends on receipt of funding from the Department for Education. The local authority has brokered support from an outstanding school in the local area. This school will provide buddies for middle and senior leaders and is supporting developments in leadership, teaching and learning. The proposed academy sponsor has provided help with human resources and finance.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Executive Director for Children, Young People and Families for Barnsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane

**Her Majesty's Inspector**