

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

Direct T 01695 566933
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
ggleaden@cfbt.com



27 November 2013

Mrs Pat Russell
Headteacher
Pensby High School for Boys: A Specialist Sports College
Irby Road
Heswall
Wirral
Merseyside
CH61 6XN

Dear Mrs Russell

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Pensby High School for Boys: A Specialist Sports College

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. 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 most recent monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged as having serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in April 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Wirral.

Yours sincerely

Ian Richardson

Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2013

- Improve the overall quality of teaching, particularly in English and science, so that all students make good or better progress by:
 - sharing existing good and outstanding practice more effectively
 - making sure all teachers plan lessons with activities that stimulate and engage learners, especially those who are capable of achieving the highest levels or grades
 - checking that all teachers are using the school marking policy effectively so that students get clear information on how to improve their work and that students are encouraged to respond to teachers' comments.
- Raise achievement in English and science by:
 - strengthening the quality of leadership in these subjects
 - regularly checking on students' progress in these subjects to make sure targets are being met and taking swift and effective action if they are not.
- Improve students' reading and writing skills by:
 - rigorously applying the whole-school literacy policy so that students know exactly what they need to do to improve their reading and writing.
- Ensure that students make good progress in all subjects in the sixth form by:
 - improving attendance
 - setting individual targets for students that will help them to aim high and make at least good progress
 - making sure that new monitoring procedures result in rapid and sustained improvement in the quality of teaching in the sixth form.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 November 2013

Evidence

The inspector met with the Principal and two members of the senior leadership team. In addition, he also had meetings with the assistant headteacher and coordinator responsible for teaching and learning. He had further meetings with four senior leaders and four area team leaders, the Chair of Governors and with two local authority officers. The inspector carried out ten joint lesson observations with four senior leaders and scrutinised a range of school documentation including planning, monitoring records and performance data analysis.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection there has been a significant number of staff changes with twelve teachers leaving the school and ten new teachers appointed to the school for September. In addition, the school has appointed a data specialist to analyse assessment and other performance data to focus on tracking improvement. The school has appointed a lead literacy teacher to work with the area leader in English to address one of the points for improvement given in the Ofsted inspection report.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The school leaders have continued to monitor improvement as set out in the school improvement plan. They provide the school with well-coordinated management and clear direction.

In seeking to improve achievement in the sixth form the school has adopted a reporting system for measuring performance against national standards. A principal outcome of this change is to provide greater challenge to staff and to raise their expectations of higher standards from students. Monitoring data have been used to inform intervention strategies, such as extra sessions provided during the summer break and some students repeating coursework to raise standards. The analysis of the sixth form performance data subsequently undertaken has extended back three years and has identified the performance of students up to the Ofsted inspection and has provided a year-on-year comparison.

The raising of achievement across the age range has been addressed by an increased rigour in assessment, analysis of performance data and intervention activities. Staff are informed about performance in subjects by, for example, the use of a data dashboard for Key Stage 4. All staff have been trained in the use of the data dashboard and, from the next monitoring point, the data will show the performance of individual teachers in addition to subject performance. There is a greater accountability of area team leaders and each one meets with a monitoring team of senior leaders and a governing body representative to explain performance in their subject area. Each subject area team leader has submitted a strategy for bringing about more consistent assessment and monitoring of performance. The data may be gathered in different ways related to subjects' needs but senior leaders approve them and the data allow fair comparison between subjects.

The governors now have an action plan for improving the challenge and support they give to the school. They fully support the focus on teaching and learning, analysis of performance data and the work bringing about greater consistency of marking and assessment. The Chair of the Governing Body attends the Schools Causing Concern meetings along with senior leaders from the school and local authority officers. The Chair also now plays a full part in the review of standards that takes place at each monitoring point. Governors have got on with the implementation of their plans for improvement which have included producing role descriptions for each link governor. The appointment of link governors is in progress and governors are now more involved in evaluating progress at monitoring points. It is the governors' view that there is improved behaviour as a consequence of the improvement of teaching and learning brought about by effective staff development addressing identified needs.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- All team leaders have improvement plans that have been scrutinised by senior leaders. Their focus on improving teaching and learning and providing sound quality assurance is aimed at raising achievement.
- There is an increased use of moderation to bring about consistency in assessment and the reinforcement of good practice through the exchange of views involved.
- The senior leaders have promoted improvement by increased monitoring activity and affirming the accountability of team leaders and teachers.
- The foundation stone of consistency is the implementation of a new marking and assessment policy introduced in September. Frequency and quality of marking are defined. The policy includes the marking of literacy across the whole curriculum.
- A whole school training day in October focused on differentiation, challenge and group work all identified as areas for improvement in the Ofsted report.
- There is a group of teachers looking at pedagogy that meets monthly and is open to all staff to discuss teaching and learning and to share good practice. There is now a Lead Learners' programme to develop teachers' capacity to lead and improve teaching and learning.

- The more rigorous monitoring of teaching through lesson observation has resulted in an improvement in the quality of teaching. Data gathered so far this academic year show the quality of teaching and learning to have risen to 85% of lessons being good or better.
- There is a more rigorous approach to challenging absence which has resulted in significant improvement. Year 12 attendance has risen from 81% last year to 93% this year. In Year 13 the data show improvement from 76% last year to 88% this year.
- Literacy is being developed systematically with a lead literacy teacher working with the area Leader in English. The school's literacy strategy was launched in February 2013 with each subject area producing its own literacy action plan. There is increased team-teaching and consequential sharing of good practice in literacy.

External support

The local authority continues to work closely with the school. Local authority officers are frequent visitors to the school, collaborating with senior leaders on such matters as subject reviews and a whole school scrutiny of students' work. Data collected in these activities show an improvement in standards and, most importantly, a significant increase in consistency across the school of marking and assessment in line with the school's newly introduced policy. The local authority still has the school in the category of schools causing concern. However, in response to improvements in the school, the frequency of the Schools Causing Concern meetings has decreased from monthly to half-termly. This group has thoroughly reviewed the results of external examinations in September and in December will evaluate the progress being made in outcomes for students.