

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 566939
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email: glaw@cfbt.com



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Mr Richard Smyth
Headteacher
Fulwood Academy
Black Bull Lane
Fulwood
Preston
Lancashire
PR2 9YR

Dear Mr Smyth

Special measures monitoring inspection of Fulwood Academy

Following my visit to your school on 17 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Principal, senior and middle leaders within the academy, including the head of mathematics and acting head of English, and the Chair of the Governing Body. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plan were evaluated. Brief visits were made to several lessons. The academy's procedures for responding to complaints were considered, along with its arrangements for ensuring students' safety.

Context

There have been several changes to staffing in the mathematics department since the academy's recent section 5 inspection. The head of mathematics and second in department left at the end of the autumn term and another member of the department is absent. Effective arrangements have been made to ensure that the department is staffed by suitably qualified subject specialists. A vice-principal is now leading the mathematics department. Leadership of English has been transferred to the second in department due to the absence of the head of department and an additional English teacher has been recruited to build the capacity of the department to meet students' needs. A new governor has been appointed who has educational expertise.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plan are closely integrated and demonstrate that swift and well-directed action is being taken to overcome weaknesses and raise standards.

The roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team have been realigned to ensure that there is a consistent focus on improving teaching and boosting students' progress. Line management arrangements and areas of accountability are clear. An associate senior leader has been given the remit of ensuring that staff have access to high quality data and are trained in how to make best use of it. The academy's approach to the collection and use of achievement data has been rationalised so that teachers now have comprehensible information from which they can plan appropriately for their classes.

Leaders, staff, governors and the sponsor are proud of the academy and determined to make the necessary improvements. Links have been forged with successful schools and relationships established to enable the sharing of good practice. Leaders are working together to ensure that developments in the academy are complementary in order that the expectations placed on staff are reasonable and that staff clearly understand what is expected of them. The role of subject leaders is being developed systematically and their work in securing the academy's improvement by raising students' progress is checked on through scheduled, structured discussions with senior leaders.

The academy's procedures for dealing with complaints and safeguarding students meet requirements. The improvements in students' attendance noted at the section 5 inspection have been sustained.

The governing body is in the process of commissioning an external review of its performance, to include the effectiveness with which the academy uses and evaluates its pupil premium funding. The outcomes of this review will be integrated within the academy's improvement plan. A standards committee has been established whose principal focus is the monitoring of students' academic progress. This committee will evaluate the implementation of the academy's improvement plan.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector