

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5359
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

31 January 2014

Mr Mike Gunston
Interim Headteacher
The Grange School and Sports College
Tower Road North
Bristol
BS30 8XQ

Dear Mr Gunston

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Grange School and Sports College

Following my visit with Fran Ashworth and Raye Allison-Smith, Additional inspectors, to your school on 29 and 30 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2013. 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.

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

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs) as we discussed provided they have support during their induction year from the Cabot Learning Federation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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, the Education Funding Agency, the Chief Executive of the Cabot Learning Federation and the Director of Children's Services for South Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely
Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Take action to eliminate inadequate teaching and increase the proportion that is good across all year groups, including the sixth form, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - insist on high standards of behaviour at all times
 - expect the very best work from all students
 - ensure work set in lessons matches students' different capabilities and that all are fully involved in the tasks
 - improve the way they use questioning in lessons to check students' understanding and involve them more in their own learning
 - improve feedback to students so that they know how to improve their work and that they check that students act upon the teachers' suggestions.
- Raise achievement, especially in mathematics, science and the humanities subjects, and narrow the gap in achievement between those supported by the pupil premium and other students, by:
 - closely checking students' performance to identify any underachievement
 - rapidly giving support to those students who are in danger of underachieving
 - improving the support provided to disabled students and those who have special educational needs, both in class and when students are withdrawn for extra help.
- Strengthen the way in which all leaders improve teaching and ensure good achievement, including in the sixth form, by:
 - checking regularly that teaching is good enough and accurately identifying where improvements are needed
 - providing effective guidance and support to teachers, including the chance to see the best teachers teaching
 - checking that teachers follow up advice and instructions given after lesson observations and act on these successfully so that students' achievement improves
 - holding teachers in all subjects strongly to account for the quality of their teaching and assessment and how well students achieve.
- Increase the effectiveness of the governing body in holding the school to account by:
 - ensuring that governors are more active in monitoring the school's performance and that they check regularly that agreed actions are proving effective in improving the quality of teaching and closing the gaps in achievement
 - commissioning an external review of governance in order to assess how else this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 29 and 30 January 2014

Evidence

During this inspection we observed 25 lessons, most of which were jointly observed with a senior leader. You joined me for a learning walk to see how well students behaved in classes where the teacher was new to the school or to that group. We met with you, the interim deputy headteacher, senior leaders, the executive headteacher, the Chief Executive from the Cabot Learning Federation, a representative from the local authority, two members of the governing body, groups of students and groups of teachers.

Inspectors closely scrutinised the school's practice and procedures for ensuring the safety of students.

At the time of the inspection a number of staff were absent ill from school.

Context

The local authority has identified that the school does not have sufficient students to continue in the current way. It has decided to consult on the proposed closure of the school to new admissions on 31 August 2015 and the closure of the school to all pupils on 31 August 2016. At the same time the local authority will develop and support the submission of a bid to the Department for Education to open a studio school (The Grange Studio School) on the site of the current school.

A number of staff left the school in December 2013 and the school rearranged the timetables for Years 8 and 9 to take account of reduced numbers of students. At present there are a number of staff on short-term contracts and some staff have taken on extra responsibilities as subject leaders to cover absences. There are two vacancies for parent governors which the school is hoping to fill soon.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Achievement for students in Year 11 is improving across all subjects. More students are making better rates of progress than previously. For example, in mathematics and English the proportions making and exceeding expected progress are predicted to be close to national figures when results are finalised this summer. Across other years, frequent assessment indicates that students are also making better progress.

While in many lessons students make good progress there remain times where progress is limited, either by the lack of challenge in the work, low expectations of what students need to complete in a given time or weak literacy skills. For example, students discuss their work well and show they can articulate good verbal responses to questions with insight and factual knowledge. However, their written responses often lack attention to detail and they are written with poor grammar or spelling.

The school has rightly identified that the proportion of students who have special educational needs is well below that which could be expected in similar schools. In classrooms, teaching assistants who work with a specific student are effective in ensuring that the student is able to complete their work well; as some students were keen to let inspectors know, 'They don't do it for us, they make us think for ourselves.' However, at times when a student has been identified as being eligible for additional help, for example through the use of a computer with their written work, this is not consistently available, which means their writing is of a lower quality.

Students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those from service families) are identified in all classes so that teachers know to give additional support. The gap between how well these students achieve compared to others is reducing through planned in-class support and additional lessons for reading and writing.

In the sixth form the school works in a consortium with three other local schools. Results for A-level examinations remain below those expected for students given their starting points. Regular checks on how well students are doing enable senior leaders to put in a programme of support if students are underachieving. The latest information for students' current performance in the sixth form indicates that standards are set to rise. Published information shows that the proportion of students who continue with their studies after Year 12 into Year 13 is well below the national average. However many who leave are international students who only intended to stay for one year and when these are accounted for, the figure is average. Presently few students in Year 12 undertake a work placement and plans are in place to give more an opportunity complete a placement this summer so that they are better prepared for employment.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching continues to improve, although as yet not much teaching is outstanding. Staff make good use of the feedback given after lesson observations and of the on-going professional development opportunities to further refine their teaching practice. Relationships between staff and students are excellent.

Progress is better in some lessons because students are challenged by work that is set at the right level for them. For example, in geography, teaching is planned to build upon students' previous understanding so that students are quickly extending their knowledge of the topic covered. However, too often the progress of the most able students is slowed because the work they are given is too easy.

Teachers use seating plans well to identify students who may need additional support. In the better lessons teachers prepare specific questions to ask of different groups of students. However, this is not consistent and at times students are either not challenged by questions or find them too difficult.

In mathematics and science the quality of teaching has improved because teachers have focused their teaching to help students understand the concepts covered in their work rather than just practising questions after they have been taught something new. Good use is made of opportunities to investigate different mathematical situations or to complete practical work in science.

The quality of marking has improved both in its frequency and its effectiveness, although there are still books which are not well marked. In the best examples students respond well to teachers' advice from the 'even better if' comments and on occasion students identify their own improvement points or those for other students.

Students are not always set homework in line with school expectations. The most common homework task is to ask students to 'complete or finish off class work'. This does not help students to reinforce their understanding or to apply what they have learnt to a new situation. Form tutors and/or pastoral leaders do not check well enough that all homework is completed by students when it should be.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour has improved around school and in lessons because students respond positively to the improved teaching. Attitudes to work in lessons are good and students show pride in their work and the quality of presentation in their books is good. Behaviour around school is good and students show that they take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Students feel safe within school because they are confident there are staff who will support them if there are any problems. Students have a good understanding of the different types of bullying. They say when an incident occurs the school responds quickly, including supporting both the bully and the victim.

Students have a good understanding of the risks they face so they are able to make more informed choices. Students have received important information on relationships, including how to prevent being in an oppressive relationship and discussing couples from same sex relationships. Students are aware of the risks from substance abuse, including smoking, drugs and alcohol. Students also have a good understanding of e-safety and how to protect themselves when using social network sites. They also recognise the dangers from sending inappropriate text messages, including images, which they would not want to get out to a wider audience.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Your excellent support for staff, along with that from the interim deputy headteacher, has ensured staff morale has remained positive during some very worrying and difficult times. In particular, you have remained focused in ensuring all senior and middle leaders are improving the quality of teaching. Middle leaders now take more responsibility to bring about necessary improvements in their subject

areas. The executive headteacher and the Chief Executive of the Cabot Learning federation continue to work well so that work with other academies within the federation is effectively supporting staff at all levels to improve. Staff must be congratulated on the way they have remained focused on helping the students achieve during this period of uncertainty.

You have ensured that any weaker performance is challenged. For example, staff identified as needing to improve their teaching are supported by staff from the school or the federation. Such support is used well to precisely identify the areas of teaching that each needs to improve and then to put in place appropriate training to help bring this about. This approach has ensured improvements to the overall quality of teaching. Subject leaders have received good support to develop their role as leaders of teaching within their departments. In some areas where subject leadership is less strong, or has recently changed, external consultants are used to help bring about improvements to teaching as well as to develop the expertise of the subject leader. Consequently the quality of teaching is steadily improving, for example in English, mathematics, humanities, science, design and technology and physical education.

The school's systems to ensure the safety of the students are good and cover all areas. The systems for dealing with any potential child protection issues are well established and cover all foreseeable eventualities. However, governors have not checked rigorously enough to ensure these systems are as good as they could be.

Governors have responded well to the challenges over the last few months and have continued to hold the school to account for achievement, especially at Key Stage 4. The reduction in the number of governors has weakened the governing body's ability to challenge all aspects of the school's work as robustly as it would like. Governors rightly recognise that they have not concentrated on how students in the sixth form are progressing or checked to see if the school's safeguarding procedures are rigorous.

External support

The Cabot Learning Federation continues to provide excellent support for the school, particularly by providing highly effective leadership from the executive headteacher, the interim headteacher and deputy headteacher. Staff benefit from the federation's extensive network of support. They are able to observe good and outstanding teaching as well as to access the high-quality training opportunities which exist within the federation.

The local authority has provided good support for the governing body and the school during a period of uncertainty regarding the school's future. The local authority has undertaken evaluations, some in conjunction with the federation, of how the school is progressing against the areas identified in the last inspection report.

The school should now:

- work with the local authority to support governors in showing them how to check that all safeguarding procedures are as effective as possible so they are able to identify any areas that need improvement.