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10 March 2014

Mr Richard Barnes  
Headteacher  
Fleetwood High School  
Broadway  
Fleetwood  
Lancashire  
FY7 8HE

Dear Mr Barnes

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Fleetwood High School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 March 2014, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in March 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 Interim Executive Director for Children & Young People for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2013**

- Improve further the quality of teaching across the school so that all teaching is at least good in order to raise students' achievement by:
  - making sure that teachers give activities to students in lessons are neither too easy nor too difficult
  - making sure that students have more opportunities to find things out for themselves rather than relying too much on the teacher
  - making sure teachers avoid over-long introductions to lessons so that students remain enthusiastic and want to learn
  - improving the consistency and quality of marking so that it shows students what they need to do to improve their work
  - making sure that teachers apply the school's policies and procedures for dealing with poor behaviour consistently well.
  
- Improve achievement in mathematics and ensure that all students make at least good progress by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what students are capable of achieving
  - making sure that students gain a firm grasp of basic mathematical skills in Key Stage 3 so that they are able to tackle more difficult tasks in Key Stage 4 with greater confidence and ease
  - providing more opportunities for students to apply their mathematical skills in solving problems.
  
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that subject leaders check rigorously on students' achievement and the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility and use the outcomes to identify and tackle areas for improvement, especially in mathematics.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 March 2014**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, several faculty leaders and a representative of the local authority. The inspector also briefly met with the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors. Discussions were also held with groups of students from Years 9 and 11. The inspector reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school, including the self-evaluation, the single central record, achievement data, a range of faculty leader files, records of school lesson observations, as well as several monitoring reports. A book scrutiny across a range of subjects was also carried out. The inspector also observed 11 lessons jointly with senior leaders and observed their feedback to teachers.

### **Context**

The school continues to face on-going staffing turbulence following significant restructuring of staffing, including the pastoral system and line management structure. There are 13 fewer full-time equivalent staff at the school and a number of classes are being covered by long-term supply teachers.

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

School leaders and managers are securing improvements for students, especially in examination classes. Inconsistencies still remain between classes and subjects. Although there is clear evidence for an improving trend at GCSE, students continue to underachieve at Key Stage 3. Current data predict that 53% of students will attain five A\* to C grades (including English and mathematics). This is above government floor standards (which are the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress), something the school has failed to achieve in previous years. The gap between pupil premium (additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in care of the local authority and those from armed services families) students and their peers continues to close, although this is not consistent across subjects. Given their low starting points, the number of students predicted to make expected progress in English is 70%, which is close to the national average, Expected progress in mathematics, although increasing to 56% will, however, remain below the national average, in part due to on-going staffing issues in the department. Much of this improvement in outcomes, however, is heavily dependent on the extensive use of intervention strategies, especially in examination classes. Teaching throughout the school remains fragile, inconsistent and is not good.

Although restructuring of faculties has ensured clearer line management, middle leaders currently do not yet show they have the vision or experience to improve teaching in their areas of responsibility. They have become more adept at monitoring and judging the quality of students' work and are able to identify underachievement more clearly. However, they are less clear how to improve

practice and make a positive impact in the classroom. They remain reluctant to challenge colleagues and are overgenerous in their assessment of the quality of teaching. Faculty improvement plans frequently focus on monitoring, but show little evidence for improving subject pedagogy.

Students interviewed both formally and informally were adamant that the school is improving and is a different place from the one which they had entered several years before. They put much of this down to the hard work of the headteacher and senior leaders in the school, who have a noticeable presence around the school and are frequently seen in lessons. In particular, they stressed that behaviour has improved significantly and the clear procedures outlined in the 'Fleetwood Way' behaviour strategy have had an impact in reducing disruption in classrooms and bullying. They feel that the school is now a more organised and better managed place in which they can learn. Attendance is also showing improvement, although it continues to remain below the national average.

Governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have a clear understanding of their statutory duties. The recent independent review of governance identified that 'they had sound knowledge of the school and of their roles, which enable them to effectively hold school leadership to account'. However, they are less secure in challenging subject leaders when they present updated subject reports for debate and scrutiny. They readily accept the reports and fail to ask the probing questions necessary to ascertain what the subject leader is going to do specifically to improve practice in the classroom. Improvement at GCSE is rightly praised, but underachievement at Key Stage 3 is not being sufficiently challenged.

The single central record is managed well and meets requirements fully. Safeguarding procedures are secure.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Senior leaders recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the self-evaluation at whole-school level is detailed, honest and analytical. They are accurate in their judgements and have challenged a number of middle leaders who have been overgenerous in their self-analysis of their subject.
- The revised curriculum pathways at Key Stage 4 place less reliance on vocational subjects and enable students, especially the most able, to follow more academic pathways which better meet their needs.
- Training, supported by the local authority, in assessment and moderation of students' work has enabled teachers to identify more accurately those students in danger of underachievement. As a result, early intervention, especially in examination classes, is supporting improvements in student grades.
- Weekly timetabled faculty meetings provide opportunities for teachers to meet regularly to plan and discuss issues in their subject. This supports the use of intervention very well, but is less successful in sharing good practice or improving classroom teaching.

## **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Improving the quality of teaching has stalled. Too little good teaching was observed during this monitoring visit.
- Support and training is not concentrating sufficiently on the fundamentals of good teaching in the classroom, but is concentrating on approaches often linked to monitoring, organisation or planning. These may identify poor outcomes for students, but will not in themselves improve teachers' skills in the classroom. Faculty improvement plans do not show how teachers' subject knowledge and confidence to teach effectively is to be tackled.
- Marking and poor presentation of work have been identified as a concern. Yet this issue keeps recurring in work scrutiny reviews and there is little evidence to suggest that this weakness is being addressed. Too many teachers are not following the school marking policy, with often different approaches being used in different classes in the same subject. Where work is not marked, poor presentation and a lack of pride in their work is preventing students from making good progress.
- Underachievement at Key Stage 3 continues to be an issue. It is identified in several faculty self-evaluations, yet there is little evidence in the faculty action plans that fundamental weaknesses in teaching and student underachievement are being tackled at an early stage.
- In too many lessons, weak questioning does not engage or challenge students. Also, often there is a lack of clarity in explaining to students what they are expected to do. As a result, written work frequently lacks depth and quality. Higher-ability students often find the tasks set too easy and few attain the highest grades.

## **External support**

The local authority continues to provide frequent and extensive support to the school. This includes regular on-going advice, monitoring and training from the local authority MIT (monitoring and intervention team). Help has also been brokered from a number of local schools to provide individual advice and training for every subject across the school. While this has been useful in engaging middle leaders, in particular in improving assessment and in planning teaching schemes of work, it has, as yet, failed to address fundamental weaknesses in classroom practice. The authority continues to provide some additional funding to enable middle leaders to attend subject meetings and to join subject associations as part of subject-specific support. While useful in raising awareness, this has not yet had a sufficient impact on improving teaching.