

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 566855
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
gail.hill@cfbt.com



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Mr Adrian Whiteley
Headteacher
The Mosslands School
Mosslands Drive
Wallasey
Merseyside
CH45 8PJ

Dear Mr Whiteley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Mosslands School, Wirral

Following my visit to your school on 12 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the Governing Body including the Chair of Governors, and representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's improvement plans were evaluated. The inspector visited a number of classes, accompanied by the headteacher.

Main findings

The school is improving steadily. The recent inspection did not stimulate a radical change in direction but provided added leverage for the headteacher to continue his programme of improvement.

The headteacher is driving improvement very effectively. More effective leadership is making an impact across all aspects of the school: developing capacity in leadership and management, improving teaching and learning, developing the curriculum, improving behaviour and pastoral care and, strengthening governance and the school's partnership with local schools. The impact of improvements is beginning to be seen. The decline in

attainment has been arrested; the school's GCSE results in 2013 were considerably better than predicted with improved results in English. A quarter of students in the sixth form obtained places at Russell Group universities despite competition from grammar schools. At the same time the numbers of students who left school without employment, further education or training fell to almost zero. The number of new students joining from primary schools has significantly increased, from around 120 to nearly 180.

The emphasis of leadership is on a much clearer sense of accountability. Heads of faculty are now responsible for the performance of students and their second-in-commands are responsible for the quality of teaching. Assistant headteachers have oversight of quality assurance and the improvement of teaching and learning. Performance management is very rigorous for all staff, reinforcing the culture of accountability. There is a clear understanding of where improvements are required, for example, within the humanities faculty.

Reading and writing are being improved by a concerted attempt to improve literacy across the curriculum. A curriculum is being developed that better meets the needs of students and the opportunities for work after students leave school. The school is re-establishing its interest in engineering and rural (farm) studies, for example, and the curriculum offer in the sixth form is being developed to eradicate the unacceptably high level of 'unclassified' grades that students achieved in the past.

Expectations of behaviour are higher. Fixed-term exclusions have fallen dramatically as a consequence of the school's giving students who step outside the rules the opportunity for time-out away from class in a controlled environment. New positions have been created to lead on support for students and for family liaison. The house system is strong, enabling students of all ages to mix and develop pride in collaborative achievement, including within the community. The ethos of the school is improving.

After a period when partnerships with other schools and the community have deteriorated, the school is actively reaching out once more to local schools and to other schools in the Wirral with common interests. The engagement with local primary schools in educational achievement, for example, is already gaining the confidence of primary headteachers.

The Governing Body is slimmed and refreshed with members who have a range of skills relevant to the school. Governors show a good understanding of the challenges the school faces and are developing a strategic view of the direction the school is moving towards. They understand the need for greater challenge as part of the drive towards greater accountability.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority is fully supportive of the direction the school is taking and what the headteacher is doing, particularly in challenging the old ways of working and embracing new approaches. Officers have conducted a recent review of mathematics. They support the school's collaboration with school partnerships so that schools learn from good practice within each institution. Governors access training opportunities outside school and have access to a National Leader in Governance when required.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Wirral.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett

Her Majesty's Inspector