

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566939

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: glankertis@cfbt.com



Mr S Peach
Headteacher
The Oldershaw Academy
Valkyrie Road
Wallasey
Wirral
CH45 4RJ

Dear Mr Peach

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Oldershaw Academy, Wirral

Following my visit to your academy on 8 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence presented at this visit indicates that senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. However, self-evaluation and action planning require improvement. I therefore recommend that you take further action to:

- ensure that improvement planning:
 - is clearly referenced to the areas for improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection
 - builds on a self-evaluation that is honest and clear regarding the academy's strengths and weaknesses in all aspects of its work
 - has objectives and strategies that are appropriately prioritised
 - has clear and specific actions so that all understand what they need to do and how and when the outcomes will be evaluated
 - has key milestones so that progress can be monitored against a specific timescale and help inform future planning
 - is about judging impact rather than implementation
- Engage the student voice more effectively in the improvement agenda.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, middle leaders, students, members of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, and the academy improvement partner. The academy improvement plan and self-evaluation statement were evaluated.

Context

Since the last inspection three members of the English department have left the academy and you have appointed two English teachers, two science teachers, a history teacher and an English support tutor.

Main findings

The current progress data you have presented, including the early entry GCSE results indicate that students are likely to achieve GCSE results in summer 2014 that are above floor standards. This is being attributed to the academy's greater focus on the analysis of progress data leading to targeted interventions, particularly for Year 11 students such as one to one sessions, master classes and more effective use of tutorial time. Subject leaders now monitor the progress of groups and individuals and every student has an individual education plan.

To ensure that assessments are accurate the English department is using a new data tracking system and has analysed the November GCSE scripts to see what lessons can be learned; as a result the target grades of some students have been revised. An accelerated reading programme has been introduced in Year 7 which is having a positive impact on reading ages and you have appointed a literacy consultant. Literacy across the curriculum is a focus for improvement but is not yet fully implemented.

The Academy has sought external support. Staff have visited three high performing schools to look at target-setting, observe outstanding practice in English, and attend a middle leadership training and strategic planning course.

A small number of less experienced and weaker teachers are now being supported in their teaching by more experienced colleagues. However, the academy is yet to fully utilise and share the good practice found within its own departments. Despite the recommendation in the last inspection report that the outstanding practice in the Learning Centre should be shared across the academy, this does not appear in the academy improvement plan and there is limited evidence that the good practice of the mathematics department is being disseminated.

Although the academy is taking action to address deficiencies in teaching and learning none of the students I met could identify any improvements in the way they were being taught. When asked to recall a memorable and/or interesting learning experience since the last inspection only two of the twelve were able to do so and these were both lessons taught by external visitors. The students were most complimentary about mathematics lessons which they described as 'practical' and where the teachers were 'strict and expected a lot'. They were least impressed with lessons where they copied from texts. Students did not feel that their views were sought on their experience of teaching and learning.

The self-evaluation statement does not judge the academy against national or external criteria and the academy improvement plan which runs from 2013-2015 does not indicate whether any success criteria have already been met or what still needs to be done. The plan does not prioritise actions sufficiently well and fails to explicitly address all of the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. In meetings leaders and managers tended to focus on barriers to learning rather than analysing why students in the academy make considerably more progress in some subjects than others and why, given their starting points, they are often failing to meet expectations. I recommend that action plans be reviewed in the light of the recommendations at the top of this letter.

Governors are keen to move forward with the improvement agenda. They have not shied away from their responsibility to ensure that staff remuneration is match to performance and have worked hard to improve the capacity of the workforce through well-considered appointments. They have approved the introduction of an extended leadership team and are aware of the need to more rigorously interrogate evidence of progress and improvement. The recommendation that there be an external review of governance has been accepted but has not yet taken place.

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

Staff have undertaken some visits to schools and you have commissioned external support for literacy. You have continued to fund support from the academy improvement partner who has been working with middle leaders for the past two years but have not yet sought any enhanced support from either the academy improvement partner or the local authority. I recommend that the senior leadership team and governors urgently review whether current levels of external support are appropriate to move the academy forward with sufficient urgency.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk] – for academies