

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566932

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: hcarnall@cfbt.com



12 June 2014

Mr Des Herlihy
Interim Executive Principal
Headteacher
Furness Academy
Park Drive
Barrow-in-Furness
Cumbria
LA13 9BB

Dear Mr Herlihy

Special measures monitoring inspection of Furness Academy

Following my visit with Anne Pontifex, Her Majesty's Inspector and Derek Barnes, Additional Inspector to your academy on 10 and 11 June 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 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 academy is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures. I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Cumbria.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, and reduce rapidly the variation in the quality of teaching across the academy, by:
 - developing and implementing an academy-wide strategy for improving teaching, monitoring its impact and holding staff closely to account for agreed actions
 - eradicating the few remaining instances of inadequate teaching and sharing more effectively the examples of good and outstanding practice across the academy
 - ensuring that lessons include opportunities for students to be more actively engaged in their learning and that teachers move them on quickly to more challenging work
 - increasing the impact of homework and marking, and checking more effectively that they are making a difference to students' learning.

- Develop and implement a focused strategy to rapidly improve achievement, so that it is at least good for all students, to include:
 - raising the expectations of staff of what all students can achieve, including through the use of challenging targets for every student
 - improving the impact of support provided for students with special educational needs, including through strengthening the work of teaching assistants
 - ensuring that funding provided through the pupil premium is effective in raising the achievement of those students for whom it is intended
 - eradicating any instances of poor behaviour that slow students' learning in lessons, and reducing further the time lost through fixed-term exclusions from the academy
 - improving the attendance of all groups of students, and reducing more rapidly the proportion of students who are persistently absent from the academy
 - ensuring that changes to the curriculum and decisions to enter students for external examinations at different points in the school year do not have a detrimental impact on the achievement of any students, including the most-able.

- Improve the strategic leadership, management and governance of the academy by ensuring that:
 - action planning is based on a thorough and accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy's performance, and that plans are regularly reviewed and updated in the light of progress
 - information about students' progress, attendance and behaviour is used to anticipate underachievement and respond more effectively

- leaders' checks on teaching quality are closely linked to a detailed analysis of the progress that pupils make in each subject
- performance management procedures include a close link between challenging targets for staff and decisions about pay and salary progression
- governors have a clear view of the performance of the academy and more effectively hold leaders and managers to account for improvements
- the governing body takes part in, and responds to, an external review of governance to identify what support and training governors need.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 June 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, senior leaders, middle leaders, groups of students and representatives of the governing body.

Context

A few teachers have left since the last monitoring visit and a new teacher has been recruited. Approximately 30 staff will leave the academy in the summer either to move to new posts or as a result of redundancies.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Although achievement overall is set to rise for all students, the gap between the achievement of those students who are eligible for support through the pupil premium and their peers at Key Stage 4 remains too wide. Not enough evaluation of this group's achievement has been done at Key Stage 3.

Predictions for this summer's GCSE examinations show that progress in English and mathematics will be broadly in line with national averages overall. However, middle ability students are still not consistently making expected progress in these subjects.

Students were seen making good progress in English, mathematics and science but progress over time remains inconsistent, resulting in some students not achieving as well as they should.

The progress of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is still weak because they do not always receive the necessary support from teachers in lessons. For example, scrutiny of one boy's book in humanities showed that the teacher noted that his work was 'untidy' over a number of months but there was no evidence of any support being given to help him present his work better. He did not receive helpful feedback on how to make progress and continued to underachieve.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve but improvements are unlikely to be sustained in the short-term due to high staff turnover and a reduction in the pastoral team. Staff speak highly of the new leadership and management of teaching and learning and special educational needs. These leaders are outward-looking and have already sought training from outstanding providers outside the county and started to build partnerships to share good practice. Teachers have received high-quality training

around how to ensure all students can access the learning in their lesson. Some teachers are successfully adapting materials to help those who struggle with literacy.

Teaching in physical education and science is generally engaging and well planned, leading to good progress. However, strong practitioners in these departments are not used to best effect to drive up standards elsewhere. Students speak highly of these subjects. Year 7 physical education students learnt how to sprint like 'Roger Black and Linford Christie'. They took turns to sprint faster and faster using feedback from the teacher to help them improve. Relationships were very positive and the teacher regularly praised the boys for their efforts.

Geography books show that work is assessed well and students can clearly see what they have done well and what they need to do to make better progress. Year 8 students were enthralled by their work on flooding and were able to confidently explain what could be done to prevent flooding locally and nationally. Such confident and strong subject specialists are vital to raising standards.

The personal development and religious education curriculum is not good enough. Topics such as homophobia, bullying, knife crime and political literacy are not taught in a meaningful and effective way. Planning is sloppy, leading to big gaps in social, moral, spiritual and cultural education.

Teachers are not required to identify students who are eligible for support through the pupil premium or those who are disabled or have special educational needs in lessons so it is very difficult for leaders to monitor the quality of provision for these groups.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour has deteriorated since the last visit. Exclusions have increased and are currently twice the national average. Boys are significantly over-represented in these figures. Three more permanent exclusions were planned but the governors overturned the Principal's decisions.

Students rightly feel that there are not enough rewards for those who consistently behave well, do their homework and treat teachers with respect. Approaches to behaviour management are far too inconsistent and some students feel they are treated unfairly.

There are still not enough ways to report bullying, particularly if students do not feel confident to speak to a member of staff.

Too many students are late to school in the mornings. Attendance continues to improve but remains low for some groups including those who are eligible for

support through the pupil premium. Exclusions for this group remain well above those of their peers.

Social times continue to be well organised and supervised; there is still some rough behaviour but it is well managed by duty staff.

Some excellent behaviour was seen in a number of lessons where students are interested and engaged in their learning. For example, in a Year 11 dance lesson, girls were rehearsing for their final performance. Their focus, maturity and independence were clear testament to what Furness Academy students are capable of. Their teacher left the school at Easter but they have carried on regardless with a determination and resilience to succeed.

Arrangements to keep students safe are not good enough. The academy's records of child protection and safeguarding training are not up to date and statutory policies that should be available on the school website, for example behaviour and child protection, are not.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Staff morale is low. Teachers feel that their hard work is not being recognised. The large majority of staff who responded to the staff survey do not feel that the school is well led and managed. Many staff expressed a wish for a permanent Principal to bring stability for the next phase of improvements. Some senior leaders feel there is a lack of ethos and that they need to win the 'hearts and minds' of staff, students and the local community. They are right.

There is a core of key leaders who work incredibly hard and care deeply about the impact of their actions on the life chances of the students they serve. However, senior leaders are not operating as an effective team. Roles remain unclear, the role of the Vice-Principal lacks depth and some senior leaders are expected to do much more than others.

There are concerns around the school's financial management. Since the previous monitoring visit, governors have been alerted to a significant budget reduction for next year. Although some senior leaders knew about this some time ago, they did not inform governors in a timely manner. This has led to staff redundancies.

Inspectors and staff are concerned about the impact of redundancies on the school's capacity to improve. The reduction affects important roles within the pastoral team who say they are already 'stretched to capacity' while the large senior leadership team remains unaffected by the cuts.

Nearly £200,000 has been spent on alternative provision for 40 students this year. Senior leaders are considering spending over £100,000 to deliver alternative provision on-site next year. This potential cost cannot be justified and does not demonstrate good value for money. Furthermore, there are a number of very talented staff within the academy who already run alternative curriculum courses after school whose talents are not being used to best effect.

Self-evaluation is not rigorous enough and does not pay sufficient attention to the experience and outcomes of different groups. This leads to inequalities.

External support

The academy continues to be supported by a number of external consultants. New partnerships have been built with some outstanding providers and, as a result, some long-term lesson planning has been strengthened.

Only in exceptional circumstances, where they are crucial to the school's future success, should priorities for further improvement be added

- Create a positive school ethos embraced by all and develop a high-quality and responsive programme for personal development, citizenship, beliefs and values.