

Tribal  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 0117 311 5307  
**Direct email:** rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com

20 June 2014

Mr Andy Mortimer  
Interim Principal  
Bexhill High School  
Down Road  
Bexhill-on-Sea  
TN39 4BY

Dear Mr Mortimer

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Bexhill High School**

Following my visit with Simon Hughes, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Robin Gaff, Additional inspector, to your academy on 18 and 19 June, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures, and NQTs may be appointed.

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 Interim Academic Board and the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex and as below.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve teaching considerably, so that by the summer of 2014, attainment at GCSE is broadly average and that, in the year between March 2013 and April 2014, at least an average proportion of students in Key Stage 3 make the expected progress, by:
  - increasing the pace and challenge in each lesson
  - raising teachers' expectations of what students can and should achieve
  - ensuring all students are given work which precisely matches their assessed needs
  - improving the marking of students' work, so that it provides guidance which helps students to improve their work more quickly
  - not accepting work which is poorly presented.
  
- Enhance the curriculum, ensuring that the current interest and breadth in the curriculum are not lost, by:
  - closely addressing students' needs in literacy and numeracy right from the start of Year 7
  - making sure the curriculum for Key Stage 3 students is appropriately planned, preparing them well for Key Stage 4
  - making sure that learning in Year 9 is more productive and used effectively to prepare students for the next phase of their education.
  
- Extend significantly the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance by:
  - ensuring the senior leadership team has the capacity and necessary expertise to bring about the improvements needed, particularly in the key areas of teaching and the curriculum
  - holding middle leaders to account much more closely for the quality of provision and students' progress in their areas of responsibility
  - managing more robustly the school's work with disabled students, those with special educational needs and those supported by pupil premium funding, and checking carefully the impact of this work on the students concerned
  - evaluating the work of the school accurately, more regularly and in greater detail
  - sharpening school improvement planning
  - making sure that the monitoring of teaching focuses on the impact it is having on the progress students make and helps each individual teacher to improve, even where lessons are taught by more than one teacher
  - ensuring that teachers' assessments of students, and the school's data used to track students' progress, are well moderated, accurate and reliable
  - improving the effectiveness of the performance management of staff

- undertaking an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 June 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors met the interim Principal and head of school, the Principal designate appointed for September, members of the interim academic board, staff in positions of responsibility, a representative of the Prospects Academies Trust, groups of staff and groups of students. An inspector spoke on the telephone to a consultant working with the interim academic board and to an official from the Department for Education. Inspectors observed lessons, some jointly with school leaders, and analysed documents, including the school development plan and records of students' progress. They talked to students during break times and observed behaviour around the academy site.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection Prospects Academies Trust has stated its intention to withdraw as sponsor of the academy. The Department for Education has identified The Attwood Academies Trust as its preferred sponsor to take over from Prospects. Three new vice-Principals have been appointed to start in September, including one from within the academy staff, and five staff have left the academy. One member of the interim academic board has signalled his intention to resign at the end of the academic year. Consultations are on-going between senior leaders, the academy sponsors and contractors over remodelling the open-plan teaching spaces into smaller classrooms, and over the heater venting system.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Students' progress over time continues to accelerate, notably among the Year 11 students who have just completed their examinations, reflecting the extra support provided. Progress among younger year groups is improving but less rapidly. The academy has understandably put much emphasis on improving key subjects such as English, mathematics and science but recognises that progress across a range of subjects still needs to improve significantly. Students are making better progress in lessons and building their learning more securely, as reflected in their books which provide a better record of learning. This is not consistent, with changes in staffing meaning some students have work missing. Unsurprisingly the students make good progress in lessons where they understand the purpose of their learning and the features of good work. This is more often the case than in the past but is not yet the norm, so too often they are not sure how to achieve well. Students' overall literacy skills are below average on entry to the academy and do not develop well enough in lessons. This holds them back in discussions, where they do not always develop and extend their ideas fully, and in writing notes, for example to record what is said.

## **The quality of teaching**

The improvements in teaching seen at the last visit have been consolidated with reasonable evidence of further gains; but the pace needs to quicken. Teachers put a great deal of effort into supporting Year 11 students as they prepared for examinations. This reflects well on the staff's determination to move the school forward, but also suggests that day-to-day teaching needs to be better to avoid this type of late intervention.

Teachers' expectations of students continue to rise and more lessons are planned with levels of challenge matched to students' differing ability. In the best lessons, teachers make sure they explain how the work links to students' target grades. This is not consistent and too often teachers outline progressively harder work without explaining how and why it links to successively higher grades or targets, leaving students unsure how to achieve or exceed their targets.

Teachers' management of lessons is improving. They plan sequences of events more effectively to sustain learning. Teachers' checks on students' progress through questioning are better, as are their explanations of key points at each stage of work, but staff need to consider these in more depth. For example, questioning is not always tuned finely enough around students' varied abilities, and discussions of next steps do not routinely engage students enough. In part this is due to difficulties managing the large groups, but this is not universally the case and the intended move to smaller classes is unlikely to solve these issues by itself.

Support for students who are disabled or have special educational needs is improving in mainstream classes with additional adults deployed more effectively. Nevertheless, there remain too many instances of these students and students of lower ability not receiving the support they need when they get stuck in lessons.

Marking is improving steadily. Subject leaders monitor the quality more regularly. Students are clearer about what their targets are and most books record these. Teachers miss too many opportunities to refer back to students' targets when marking. Homework, introduced this spring was initially widely set but this has tailed off and the academy should make sure that the homework policy is adhered to.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' attitudes to learning remain largely positive. Most arrive in lessons ready to learn and sustain their focus. Practical equipment is usually used sensibly by students. In the less effective lessons a small minority drift off task, but there is little disruption to learning. It is crucial for the academy to build on this solid bedrock by establishing consistently good teaching so students' positive approach is not lost.

Around the site the large majority of students behave well, are welcoming to visitors and get on well with each other. A few instances of inappropriate behaviour were observed, including some bad language in the earshot of inspectors. A planned change to the school day for next year, linked to curriculum changes, will see more students on break at the same time, and it will be important to get the balance of supervision right, especially with limited outdoor space.

Good work by staff is improving attendance, particularly among students supported by the pupil premium. Overall attendance remains below the national average.

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

The interim Principal and the Head of School have sustained staff morale and kept the focus on teaching while dealing with changes in the senior leadership team, sponsorship arrangements and the building. Their effective work with the incoming Principal means she is aware of what remains to be achieved. Good communication with parents and carers and the community has been provided via newsletters, email and the website.

The work of the interim academic board has developed. The consultant, employed by Prospects Academies Trust to bolster their skills in monitoring the academy, has improved their ability to question leaders about students' progress and teaching. Useful meetings have been held with subject leaders to check their impact. Interim academic board members are keen to play a role in the future.

Senior leaders have improved the level of evaluation in their strategic plan, paying more attention to students' progress and the monitoring of teaching. Sensibly, working closely with the Principal designate, they drew up a set of practical steps for the transition to her leadership of a restructured senior team, and these steps are underway. A plan is now needed to focus on developing leadership, teaching and the curriculum in the future.

The leadership of teaching has continued, rightly, to focus on staff most in need of support. This has made a positive impact but support for staff whose teaching is not inadequate but requires improvement, or is good but could be outstanding, is not systematic enough.

Complex arrangements for shared teaching have made it difficult holding staff at all levels to account for their impact on students' achievement. It is now a priority that this be done to support the management of staff performance and salary decisions.

Working with the incoming Principal, senior staff are planning a new curriculum with shorter lessons based more often in smaller classrooms. There is a good focus on securing good achievement across a range of subjects, including in the Skills Centre, in Key Stage 3 over three years and Key Stage 4 over two years. Much of this depends on adapting the building by September, a fact not lost on senior leaders who are pushing hard to get decisions made. Adaptations are also planned to the building's chimney, after health and safety concerns about emissions. Senior leaders are doing the right things to ensure the changes are made, but the decision on paying for it rests with the sponsors and the Department for Education.

Middle leadership is improving, with subject leaders more engaged in monitoring teaching and students' progress. Year leaders are also becoming more involved in ensuring good academic progress for their year groups. Both subject and year leaders are now held to account more effectively by line managers but this requires linking to specific goals for students' achievement, notably of those more vulnerable, such as students who are disabled or have special educational needs.

### **External support**

The timing of the announcement of the withdrawal of Prospects Academies Trust, due to a decision by its parent company, was unhelpful. It came when Year 11 students were about to sit examinations, changes in senior leadership were imminent and decisions about the building were pending. Trust staff dealing directly with the academy have endeavoured to sustain the progress made. The consultant continues to be provided to work alongside the interim academic board and the interim Principal and head of school will remain in post until the end of the academic year. The Trust will continue to sponsor the academy until a new arrangement is confirmed and is working with the Department for Education on the plans and costing for adapting the building.