

CfBT Inspection Services  
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View

Skelmersdale

WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 618 8524 **Direct T** 01695 566932

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 01695 729320

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct email:** hcarnall@cfbt.com

16 July 2014

Mr Nigel Dawson

Headteacher

Fearns Community Sports College

Fearns Moss

Stacksteads

Bacup

Lancs

OL13 0TG

Dear Mr Dawson

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Fearns Community Sports College**

Following my visit to your school on 15 July 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 school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on April 30 and May 1 2014.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the two deputy headteachers, an assistant headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. Various documents were considered including the school's data regarding students' current achievement. Brief visits were made to several lessons.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection which judged the school to require special measures, two teachers of English have left and two temporary appointments have been made to replace them. One teacher of information and communication technology has left and the recruitment process is underway to secure a replacement.

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

The school's leaders demonstrate ambition for the school to make rapid progress. Their improvement plan indicates that a range of appropriate actions will be taken to improve teaching and thereby raise achievement; these actions include revision of policies, provision of staff training, establishment of links with successful schools to explore good practice and assiduous checking and evaluation of teaching and learning. The plan is lengthy and includes some duplication. Senior leaders acknowledge the need to draw up a management calendar. This will strip out key actions from the improvement plan and identify simply and precisely what will be done. Staff and governors will then have a clear understanding of the strategies being used to tackle key weaknesses.

Leaders recognise the need to secure improvement urgently: September 2014 represents a new start for staff and students with revised expectations of teaching, an unrelenting focus on learning, more thorough checks on students' progress and swift action to address areas for improvement of any underachieving students. Planned actions to improve teaching include a blend of training directed to all teachers, and specific support for individual teachers. There has been a restatement of expectations regarding professional standards, alongside encouragement for teachers to use their creativity to inspire students. Leaders are confident that achievement is beginning to rise for younger students in the school who have had a less disrupted education than those who have recently left. Achievement in public examinations in 2014 is likely, according to the school's internal assessment data, to remain below the government's floor standard.

The school agrees that improving the poor behaviour of a minority of students is an essential priority. The rates of fixed-term exclusions and 'internal' exclusions remain high. School leaders have researched practice in other schools and plan to replace the use of 'time out' so that fewer students lose learning time. The school's rewards policy is being reviewed to ensure that students are properly rewarded for behaviour, effort and achievement. The school's projected exclusion levels remain significantly above those found nationally.

Expectations of how senior and middle leaders work have been reconsidered and there is greater clarity now about levels of accountability and reporting. An example of improved capacity for the effective pooling of staff skills and knowledge is shown in the new arrangements for reviewing the progress of underachieving students.

The section 5 inspection report recommended an external review of governance and a review of the use of pupil premium. These reviews have been commissioned and will occur in September 2014. Governors have drawn up an action plan to complement the school's improvement plan. Two new governors have been appointed and the local authority is taking steps to secure further governors. Identified governors are linked to each key area within the school's improvement plan. In addition, a governor has been identified to focus specifically on the use and impact of pupil premium funding.

The local authority has brokered support for the school through an informal alliance of East Lancashire schools. Two associate headteachers have been commissioned to provide support to the leadership team; they will identify further specific specialist support, some of which may be provided by their school staff. An adviser from the local authority's monitoring and intervention team will evaluate the school's progress directly and report to the standards and effectiveness committee of the governing body. This was re-established in January 2014 at the behest of the governors and has been supported by the local authority since then. The school and the local authority are keen to ensure that the school's strands of support are complementary and proportionate to need. The Chair of the Governing Body, who has considerable experience and expertise in education, is devising searching questions to inform the work of the governors' standards and effectiveness committee so that it is well equipped to monitor the full impact of actions the school is taking to secure improvement.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**