

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View

Skelmersdale

WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 6188524

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566 937

Direct F 01695 729 320

Direct email: jsimmons@cfbt.com

17 September 2014

Ms Helen Morgan
Headteacher
Hipperholme and Lightcliffe High School
Stoney Lane
Lightcliffe
Halifax
West Yorkshire
HX3 8TL

Dear Ms Morgan

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hipperholme and Lightcliffe High School

Following my visit to your academy on 16 September 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 that have been taken since the academy's recent section 5 inspection.

This visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of governors and the executive headteacher of Abbey Grange Church of England Academy Trust, the current preferred future sponsor for the academy. A conference call was undertaken with the external professional reviewer appointed by the academy to provide support and challenge. The academy's statement of action and the post-Ofsted strategic plan were evaluated. Minutes of the most recent meetings of governors and the review of governance which has been recently undertaken were reviewed, as were a range of other documents including an analysis of examination results for 2014 and an initial impact

assessment of actions taken since the inspection. The inspector toured the academy and visited a number of faculties including PE, science and humanities.

Context

Since the inspection, seven teachers have left the academy, including the executive headteacher, a deputy headteacher and the heads of biology and chemistry. At the start of the autumn term, nine teachers joined the staff, six of whom are newly qualified teachers. The senior leadership team has been restructured and now comprises a headteacher, two deputy headteachers and six assistant headteachers. The academy is currently in the process of moving to sponsored academy status.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders and governors are clear in their determination to bring about rapid improvement. Their plans for the academy to be removed from the category of special measures are extremely ambitious. As such, they require an immense amount of work in a relatively short space of time.

Senior leaders and governors have drafted a detailed post-Ofsted strategic plan, which together with the statement of action contains many essential features. Proposed actions are relevant, address the issues raised in the report and are logically matched to the sequence of actions and priorities. However, it would be helpful for senior leaders to map the full sequence of actions for all of the areas for improvement. This is so that any particular pressure points can be clearly identified to ensure that what is planned is manageable within the designated timescales. Different individuals, leaders and governors, are clearly named as responsible for the actions, for monitoring and for evaluating each of the areas for improvement. Although specific milestones against which progress can be measured are identified for the actions proposed, it would be helpful if these were embedded within the appropriate sections of the plan for ease of reference. Although the post-Ofsted action plan covers the principal areas for improvement identified at the inspection, it is unacceptable that the academy has not yet made any substantive progress on commissioning a review of its use of the pupil premium.

The academy has informed parents and carers of the inspection findings and the headteacher and senior leaders have been proactive in talking to parents and prospective parents about any possible concerns. The academy has plans to communicate future developments, including academy sponsorship and Her Majesty's Inspector's monitoring inspection outcomes, with parents and carers.

Governors are committed to helping the academy to improve quickly. They are keen to address the issues raised by the inspection, by improving teaching, learning, behaviour, safety and attendance, strengthening leadership and governance and thus raise achievement. The review of governance has been completed and governors are currently in the process of implementing its recommendations. Strategic decisions have already been made to restructure the committees to ensure each committee has a clear focus. Governors are making plans to ensure that they can fulfil the need, in the words of the review recommendations, to 'shift from a passive role of receiving information to a pro-active one based on scrutiny, challenge and active enquiry'. The Strategic Planning Group and the Joint Review Group are noted as leading the governors' activity to monitor, support and challenge the academy. However, clear procedures are required to ensure that these two groups do not replicate each other's work. Governors' effectiveness in holding the academy to account will depend ultimately on the speed and quality of any training delivered following the review of governance. Subsequent monitoring inspections by Her Majesty's inspector will focus upon progress made on the implementation of the recommendations of the review of governance.

To assist the academy in its improvement work, governors have appointed an experienced consultant headteacher as a professional reviewer to provide much needed external challenge and support for the academy. Although this appointment is initially for the current term, it would be helpful for such external support to be considered for a much longer time frame.

Senior leaders have undertaken one review of the effectiveness of their actions to deal with the areas for improvement. However, the review of actions noted for 'improving the quality of teaching so that it enables all students to achieve well' has not been focused on the evaluation of the impact of actions upon students' achievement in lessons but rather on their completion. As a result, senior leaders are not yet clear as to the progress made in eradicating weaknesses and in bringing about swift and sustained improvements.

The nine senior leaders who comprise the senior leadership team have allocated tasks and responsibilities. However, there is insufficient distinction between their roles. For example, the headteacher and three assistant headteachers are currently responsible for teaching and learning. As a result, there is a lack of clarity in the work of senior leaders and, as in the case of the governors' committees, a considerable likelihood of the unnecessary duplication of effort.

The improvement agenda requires a comprehensive professional training programme for all staff. The plan proposed for the current year is linked to some of the key priorities from the areas for improvement; however, it is not comprehensive

enough to deliver the support and guidance required for all staff, at all levels, to ensure that the academy makes the rapid and sustained improvement required.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

However, the implementation of the post-Ofsted strategic plan would benefit considerably from:

- embedding the milestones against which progress can be measured within each appropriate section of the plan
- checking that the timescales for all actions do not create unmanageable pressure points
- ensuring that at the stated review points, senior leaders and governors focus on the evaluation of actions, rather than their completion, and that they use the outcomes of this assessment to determine next steps
- ensuring that a comprehensive professional development training programme is created for teachers, leaders and governors.

As a matter of urgency, governors and senior leaders should undertake the review of the pupil premium and implement swiftly the recommendations made.

It is also a matter of deep concern that the process of identifying and confirming an appropriate partner sponsor for the academy has not yet been completed. The ensuing uncertainty impedes the improvement agenda.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Maddison

Her Majesty's Inspector