

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

T 0300 1231231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566933
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
ggleaden@cfbt.com



9 October 2014

Mr Colin Short
Headteacher
Reddish Vale High School
Reddish Vale Road
Stockport
Cheshire
SK5 7HD

Dear Mr Short

Special measures monitoring inspection of Reddish Vale High School

Following my visit to your academy with Denis Oliver, Associate Inspector and Janet Pruchniewicz, Additional Inspector, on 7 and 8 October 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 second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2014. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may 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 Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit and the Chair of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2014

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching to ensure that all students, particularly those eligible for support from the pupil premium funding, those who have special educational needs and the most able students, achieve well, especially in English and mathematics and particularly in Key Stage 4, by:
 - using information that relates to students' progress to plan activities that match the need of all learners
 - providing appropriate support as well as much more challenge so that all students make the progress of which they are capable
 - raising the expectations of teachers as to the quality and quantity of work that should be produced by students
 - consistently providing clear guidance on how students can improve their work and making certain that students respond appropriately to that guidance
 - providing more opportunities for students to think for themselves, deepen their understanding and become more enthusiastic about learning.

- Urgently improve the safety of students, by:
 - ensuring that there are robust and accurate systems for tracking attendance, both at the start of the day and within lessons
 - increasing students' attendance and reducing persistent absence, particularly for those who attend alternative provision, those students supported by the pupil premium and those with special educational needs
 - ensuring safeguarding arrangements for those students whose circumstances make them vulnerable to bullying and discrimination, for example, and/or attending off-site provision are secure, including ensuring that students have sufficient regard for their safety when they leave the site at the end of the school day
 - making certain that all groups of students, including those whose circumstances makes them vulnerable to bullying, and their parents, are confident that bullying is dealt with robustly.

- Improve the behaviour of students in lessons and around the school and reduce exclusions by:
 - encouraging students to have a positive attitude to their learning, including being punctual to the start of lessons
 - ensuring that staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy, both inside and outside the classroom.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - using information that the school has on students' progress and outcomes more accurately in order to check and understand exactly how well the school is doing
 - ensuring that the procedures for checking the quality of teaching are robust and that everyone has a clear understanding of what good and outstanding learning looks like
 - making certain that the performance management system is having sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and that pay progression for staff is robustly linked to the outcomes for all students
 - making senior leaders more accountable for the outcomes of students
 - ensuring that governors understand data so that they can accurately check the progress of all key groups for themselves
 - improving the way that governors and senior leaders check and understand the financial situation of the school.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 7 to 8 October 2014.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and students' books and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, teachers, groups of students and members of the governing body. The inspection team paid particular attention to the quality of teaching and learning and the behaviour, safety and safeguarding of students. Inspectors observed 33 lessons, a tutorial and an assembly and held formal discussions with 34 students as well as informal discussions with students during lessons and at break times.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection visit the academy has appointed new heads of English and mathematics.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

The results of GCSE examinations in summer 2014 are disappointing for the academy. They show a decline in the percentage of students achieving five A* to C grades (including mathematics and English), a decline in the percentage achieving expected levels of progress in both mathematics and English and a widening gap in the achievement of disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs, when compared to the achievement of their peers.

Following the last section 5 inspection, a range of initiatives have been put in place to address underachievement, including the closing of the mini-school. Students who attended the mini-school did not study the full range of academic GSCEs and this has impacted on overall results. Alongside the closing of the mini-school, the academy has introduced nurture classes across all year groups and these are having a positive impact on the attendance and behaviour of some previously disaffected students. However, these changes and initiatives were insufficiently embedded by the summer term of 2014 to have a positive impact on students' overall achievement.

Teachers' assessment of students' achievement was shown to be inaccurate. They predicted far higher grades and better levels of progress than the students actually achieved. In response to this, the academy has introduced external moderation by a partner school and by a chief examiner and has increased the frequency of assessment points from three, to six per year.

The quality of teaching

In lessons there was good and sometimes outstanding practice observed. However, in too many lessons students do not make sufficient progress. This is because, in too many lessons, teachers failed to provide sufficient levels of challenge.

Inspectors observed students making good and better progress in approximately one third of lessons. In these lessons teachers typically demonstrate an infectious passion for their subject; have high expectations of what students can attempt and achieve; ask questions that test students' thinking and deepen their learning; and in turn, students respond with enthusiasm and have the confidence in their teacher to ask for further explanations if they do not fully understand. However, in the majority of lessons, although the teachers plan meticulously, they do not always inspire or capture the interest of students and tasks are often mundane and too easy. Some teachers are overgenerous with praise, declaring any and every response to a question to be 'brilliant' and offering merit rewards for all in the class, regardless of how much effort they have made.

Teachers are now aware of data relating to students' progress and are conscious of the different groups of students in their classes, such as those who may be disadvantaged, have special educational needs or are particularly gifted. In the lessons where good and better learning took place, the teachers planned activities that met the needs of different students, but this was not the case in most lessons. Given that students deemed to be disadvantaged are not achieving well at the academy, it is concerning that some teachers do not plan effectively for this group by presuming that they are also of low ability.

Evidence in students' books showed that in English and humanities in particular, students were stretched and challenged, marking was consistently good and students were expected to complete sustained pieces of writing to a high standard. Marking across the academy has improved considerably. Most teachers explain to students how they can improve their work and students are increasingly responding by completing or improving their work and commenting on the teachers' feedback.

Discussions with teachers indicate a renewed enthusiasm for their chosen profession and a genuine thirst for change and improvement to the overall quality of their teaching. They appreciate the opportunities they have had for professional development, they are enjoying sharing good practice with colleagues in their own departments and they would welcome opportunities to observe good and outstanding practice in other, similar schools.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Where teaching is resulting in good learning, students behave well and demonstrate an enthusiasm for their learning. However, students report that in too many lessons their learning is interrupted by the poor behaviour of a minority. Procedures to deal with persistent poor behaviour have been addressed by the appointment of two teachers who are 'on call' at all times to deal with such offenders. This has reduced the rates of fixed-term exclusions from the academy, but the numbers of students who spend time in the academy's internal exclusion room are still high.

Rates of attendance have improved since the academy introduced much tighter procedures for dealing with absence. This includes a telephone call to parents of absentees during period one; an earlier trigger for warning letters; more home visits; and more awareness of the importance of good attendance among students, with appropriate targets and rewards. The attendance and behaviour of students who are learning off site is now closely monitored. However, it remains the case that disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs are overrepresented in the absence figures.

Following the last section 5 inspection the local authority undertook a review of safeguarding at the academy. The review report makes a series of recommendations that includes, among other things, safeguarding training, communications with other agencies, off-site provision, attendance and exclusions, managing documentation, site management, and e-safety. In respect to all of these recommendations the academy has made improvements. Robust systems are now in place to record incidents of poor behaviour and to ensure that vulnerable students are closely monitored.

Students are of the view that there are few bullies in the academy and that, if reported to an adult, bullying will stop and the perpetrator be punished. However, the prevalence of cyber-bullying, particularly among girls, remains problematic and students say it is not always reported. Students told us that incidents of prejudiced-based bullying and derogatory language in respect of race, faith and sexuality are rare and not tolerated and this stance is supported by displays on corridors. They commented that when students are bullied or teased in the academy, it is likely to be because of their appearance, shoes or clothing, because they have different interests from others, or because they are deemed to be 'clever', and the students did not feel that the academy addressed these issues as effectively as other forms of prejudice.

Students observe safe practices in lessons, although behaviour around the building between lessons can be boisterous, particularly where students are not being supervised by an adult.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

Much has improved in the leadership and management of the academy since the last section 5 inspection. Leaders and governors responded with urgency to the report's recommendations by commissioning a strategic review by a local outstanding school, as well as reviews of science, governance, pupil premium funding, and safeguarding. It is evident that the recommendations from each of these reviews are being addressed at all levels within the academy. However, it is early days and although some positive outcomes such as improved attendance figures are evident, the full impact of the improvement strategies are yet to be seen.

The new governing body reports that systems for managing the performance of teachers are far more rigorous than in the past and this is beginning to have a positive impact on teachers' effectiveness. The governors have considerable expertise and are better able than the previous governing body to interrogate achievement data and hold the academy's leaders and managers to account.

External support

The academy has re-engaged with the local authority who has undertaken reviews of science and safeguarding. The academy is working in partnership with another school and a chief examiner to moderate teachers' assessments and a local outstanding school has undertaken a strategic review and offered opportunities for teachers to observe good and outstanding practice.