

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



19 November 2014

Mrs Francesca Cannarella
Interim Headteacher
Cheshire East Pupil Referral Unit
The Oakley Centre
West Street
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 2 PZ

Dear Mrs Cannarella

Special measures monitoring inspection of Cheshire East Pupil Referral Unit

Following my visit to your school on 18 November 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 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 school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

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

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

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 Services for Cheshire East.

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - eradicating all inadequate teaching
 - making sure teachers plan lessons that motivate students because the content is inherently interesting and they see a relevance in what they are learning and so their attitudes to learning are consistently good
 - teachers setting work that is at the right level for students of different abilities so that it is neither too easy nor too difficult
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are always deployed where they can make the most difference to students' learning.

- Improve students' rates of progress, especially in English and consequently their attainment by:
 - improving the teaching of basic reading, writing and mathematical skills and ensuring that work in other subjects gives students plenty of opportunities to use and apply these skills
 - getting students to work hard and think things out for themselves
 - insisting that students always present their work to a good standard.

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including the management committee, so that improvement is driven forward at a rapid rate by:
 - reducing the level of supply staff as quickly as possible and making swift decisions about the appointment of permanent senior leaders
 - rapidly introducing a rigorous system for managing the performance of teachers ensuring that all students on part-time tuition programmes have a full-time education and so that attendance improves further
 - analysing data on students' progress and attainment so that leaders know how well different groups of students are doing and making sure improvement plans are based on these findings
 - making sure students are prepared well for reintegration into mainstream schools so that they very rarely have to return to the unit
 - ensuring that the management committee has a full and accurate view of students' achievements, including the use and impact of pupil premium funding, how teachers' performance is managed and how this relates to the pay they receive
 - undertaking an external review of the management committee, to include a specific focus on the impact of pupil premium funding, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance can be improved.

- The management committee should:
 - make representation to the local authority in order to secure a suitable and permanent building venue for the unit
 - ensure that the plans to address the budget deficit are realised.

Ofsted will make recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18 November 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met the headteacher, deputy headteacher, groups of students, the Chair of the Management Committee, a representative from the local authority and had a meeting with the staff at the school. She observed all the students attending the school during lessons and visited an off-site provision.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the deputy headteacher has left the school and been replaced by a member of staff already working within the school. A long-term temporary teacher is covering science and a teaching assistant has been employed. Staff on temporary contracts have had these extended until the end of the academic year.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Attainment remains well below average. The school has altered its admission process to ensure that all necessary information is received from referring schools prior to students starting at Cheshire East Pupil Referral Unit. This will enable teachers to plug any gaps in students' learning, set realistic attainment targets and accurately measure the progress of individual students. The school has improved its system for tracking, monitoring and evaluating students' behaviour, attendance and academic progress. Meetings take place each half term to review students' progress. However, clear, time-constrained actions need to be agreed by the staff involved so that the impact of interventions can be measured to improve the students' rate of progress.

The school has altered the timetable and class groups to reflect the intended outcomes for each individual student. There are five classes; two are mixed-age classes consisting of students who are working on improving their skills to enable them to return more quickly and successfully to mainstream schools. The students' reintegration to another school is now regularly discussed to motivate and raise their aspirations.

Two teachers have been appointed to lead the drive to improve students' communication and mathematical skills. As a result, there is a regular, shared focus across the school to develop specific skills and reinforce their importance in all vocational and academic subjects.

Low attendance and part-time provision prevent too many pupils from making adequate progress and, therefore, they underachieve. Attendance in classes observed during the inspection ranged from 16% to 80%. Students with regular attendance tend to take pride in their work and make clear progress. Full-time provision and increased attendance for all students should be prioritised.

The quality of teaching

Staffing has been consistent and stable since the last monitoring inspection. As a result, the impact of weekly training has improved the quality of teaching. The headteacher's evidence of the improved quality of teaching through her evaluation of lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutiny matches that seen during this inspection. Some staff have visited other mainstream schools to develop consistency in their expectations of students' standards and to share good practice.

Staff are working as a team to create a positive learning environment for the students. Classroom and corridor displays reflect the high standards they want students to achieve. Work in books is mainly well presented and any graffiti, or scribbling on work, is addressed when it occurs and students respond appropriately.

Students have individual meetings with staff built into the timetable to focus on their progress regarding specific targets, such as attendance. As a result, good working relationships exist between staff and students and are reflected in improved attitudes to learning. Students confidently ask staff questions during lessons and staff respond to ensure any misconceptions are put right and understood. Teaching assistants are being used appropriately to support learning. This was evident in lessons when they questioned students to deepen their understanding and encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers' verbal feedback to students in lessons is helpful and encourages students to think more deeply and extend their ideas. There is less evidence of students responding to comments made in their books.

Teachers' planning has improved and takes more account of the needs of individual students within the class. Assessment information should be used more consistently and effectively by all staff to provide challenge at the appropriate level for all students. Lessons observed during the inspection engaged the interest of students through the use of relevant and varied resources. For example, in science, students were interested in a quiz on the effects of smoking on health and, in computing, students increased their awareness of their responsibility for personal safety when using social media through watching a thought-provoking video. The session observed at the off-site provision enabled students to make progress with their joinery skills and raised their awareness of the demands of the construction industry.

Staff are working together to improve the effectiveness of the students' individual learning plans and increase students' and parental involvement so that appropriate strategies can be put in place to support students' development. However, the evidence of a student's progress is not sufficiently shared with students so they can focus on filling the gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding to accelerate their learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The site the school occupies within The Oakley Centre has been centralised so students are no longer sharing as many facilities with the adult learners or the general public using the leisure facilities; as a result, classrooms and offices are safer. Off-site provision is monitored by the school and only local authority approved providers are used. The school site is too small and cannot accommodate all the students on roll on a full-time basis. Consequently, a number of students attend either part time or have off-site provision through work placements or alternative providers. The current school site has a negative impact on the attendance of students and their achievement.

During the monitoring inspection, students were polite and prepared to talk about what they were learning. Most were engaged in learning and any low level negative behaviour was handled well by staff to re-engage students. Students' attitudes in lessons were mainly positive and staff say this is a result of greater consistency within the school. Staff have put on coffee mornings to offer opportunities for parents to engage more positively with the school, however, these have not been well attended. Students who attend regularly and parents need to encourage other students to improve their attendance to take advantage of what is currently on offer and improve their future opportunities.

Behaviour is monitored and trends are analysed so that the school can put appropriate support in place for students. At the start of the term, the school experienced a rise in exclusions due to unsettled behaviour by students returning to site from an external provider and an incident on site. Successful measures were put in place to increase staff confidence to manage behaviour. The school is robust in following through concerns about students with external agencies and actively seeks help when support from other professionals is needed. Safeguarding training is up to date and staff are trained to use strategies to prevent, rather than react to, conflict. The single central record of safeguarding checks was checked and is compliant with regulations.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Staff said they feel supported by the senior leadership team and appreciate being consulted and involved in making decisions about school development. They said the school is calmer and has a clearer focus for improvement which has led to greater commitment by the staff. Staff, at all levels, are rightly concentrating on the provision for students and not being distracted by issues beyond their control. Staff are currently going through the school's performance management process to ensure greater responsibility, accountability and support. This development is possible due to the reduction in supply staff and the consistency of staffing, even though this is on a temporary basis. The school improvement plan has been revised to include clearer impact measures and the progress of the plan is being checked each month by the headteacher and the local authority monitoring and intervention officer.

The headteacher has improved the referral and admission process to increase the communication and involvement of parents and students with the school. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have improved their liaison with referring schools and increased their preventative work to reduce the number of students permanently excluded and improve successful reintegration of those students moving back into mainstream provision.

The website has been improved and updated and is compliant with Department for Education regulations, although it lacks detail on students' progress and the impact of the pupil premium funding (additional government money) on students' outcomes.

Although the management committee states that the school is expected to convert to an academy, no sponsor has been identified. The management committee has identified two options for future sites. One involves a new build and the other a refurbished site, however, the time scale has still to be specified and a decision made. The management committee is incomplete and has three vacancies, including a parent governor. The external review of governance has been completed and recommends that an Interim Executive Board replaces the current management committee. One of the main concerns of the review centred on the conflict of interest and independence of the current management committee to ensure that staffing and site issues are resolved as quickly as possible. The recommendation for an Interim Executive Board should be pursued as a matter of urgency.

External support

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the local authority has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose by adding timescales, responsibilities and success criteria.

The local authority has provided support to the school to improve students' attendance. For example, a local authority attendance officer worked with parents during the summer holidays to encourage increased attendance and an educational welfare officer, with a good knowledge of the sector, has been attached to the school since September. The local authority has two officers from the assets team dedicated to working with the school to prioritise its future site. The monitoring and intervention officer continues to visit the school monthly to review the progress of the action plan and has worked alongside the headteacher on making improvements to the current site, while waiting for a decision about a permanent site.

An external consultant, provided by the local authority, has supported the school with its self-evaluation process, review of progress, scrutiny of students' work and planning the performance management targets for the headteacher.