

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 566857

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: jkinsman@cfbt.com

27 January 2015

Mrs Susan Cousin
Principal
Yewlands Academy
Creswick Lane
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S35 8NN

Dear Ms Cousin

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Yewlands Academy

Following my visit to your school with Joan Hewitt HMI on 26 January 2015 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 was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in March 2014. 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 the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Local Governing Body the Interim Executive Director Children Young People and Families for Sheffield and the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching to good or better by:
 - raising the expectations of all teachers as to what all students, particularly the most able, can achieve
 - improving students' behaviour and attitudes to learning by making sure that students adhere to the school uniform code and come to all lessons expecting to work hard and quickly
 - using the information that teachers have about what students know and can do to provide them with work which helps them to learn more quickly in lessons and over time
 - ensuring that marking shows students how to improve their work and making sure that they respond to teachers' advice
 - making sure there is no inadequate teaching.

- Raise attainment by ensuring that all groups of students make good progress in all subjects by:
 - challenging the most able students in all lessons, so they are expected to think more deeply and to produce more work of a higher quality
 - increasing the rate of progress in mathematics by providing work which builds students' skills and allows them to use these skills for a range of different purposes
 - using the detailed information that the academy has to make sure that students eligible for the pupil premium make at least good progress in all year groups and in all subjects.

- Make sure that leaders and governors take the necessary steps to improve teaching and students' achievement by:
 - using the examples of good and outstanding teaching in the academy to help all teachers to recognise what the students can achieve and to improve the quality of teaching
 - making sure that subject leaders have the knowledge and skills to lead improvements in teaching and achievement in their subjects and that they are held to account for this
 - making sure that improvement plans are understood by all staff, to ensure the academy continues to improve and, in particular, to guide improvement in the quality of teaching and in students' achievement.

An external review of governance and of the academy's use of the pupil premium was recommended.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 26 January 2015

Evidence

The inspectors met with the Principal, four members of the senior leadership team, a group of students, the Chair of the Local Governing Body, a representative of the sponsor. The inspectors undertook a series of short visits to classes accompanied by two of the middle leaders. This including observation of learning in lessons, talking to students about their work and scrutinising their exercise books. The main focus of visits to lessons was to determine the extent of improvements in teaching that had taken place since the last inspection and the extent to which the most able students were receiving sufficient challenge in their learning. The inspectors also looked closely at documentary evidence provided by the academy, which included minutes of the meetings of the local governing body, the academy's self-evaluation, information on the use of the pupil premium (additional government funding to support disadvantaged students), as well as data related to students' achievement.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection there have been some changes. Ten members of staff left the school, which included five teachers, one of the co-headteachers and an assistant headteacher. Nine new teachers were recruited and 13 teachers secured promotions or took on additional leadership responsibilities within the academy. This includes three assistant headteachers. The governing body was dissolved and a new local governing body established. The Chair of the Local Governing Body was the Chair of previous Governing Body.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The quality of leadership and management is improving. The Principal and the senior leadership team have a clear view of the academy's strengths and the priorities for further improvement. The introduction of a new uniform and improved behaviour management systems mean that the greatest improvements have been to the students' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Observations during the inspection found students to be proud of their new uniform and well motivated with many seen to arrive at lessons well prepared to begin learning promptly.

The programme of guidance and support to help teachers improve their work is valued by teachers. They are encouraged to try new ideas they have learned about in training. This is helping to improve their confidence and determination to improve. A small number of teachers who require help beyond this have personal support plans and the academy's checking of learning indicates these are having a positive impact. The quality of teaching is being more robustly evaluated and takes into account students' progress, classroom observations and work scrutiny. Staff are held to account for the progress of the students they teach. New systems have been introduced to help teachers to provide feedback to students about their work.

However, there remains a little variation in the quality of teaching and in the impact of the feedback staff give students about their work so that they know what they need to do improve.

The leadership and the quality of teaching of mathematics have been strengthened through focused support and training from the sponsor. An experienced leader, from another academy in the trust, spends a day and a half at the school each week working with the head of department to help teachers to plan lessons and to model best practice in the teaching of mathematics. Although the school has made progress, leaders are aware that there is more to be done to ensure that all teaching meets the full range of students' needs.

The improving leadership of teaching is helping to secure better standards. This was reflected in better results for Year 11 students in 2014 with over half the students gaining five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. However, the gap between disadvantaged students and other students widened in terms of the proportions gaining five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics.

A review of the academy's use of the pupil premium funding was undertaken by representatives of the sponsor. This identified the need for more of the funding to be spent directly on disadvantaged students. As a consequence, some activities have ceased and an updated plan identifies how the funding will be used to help to improve the attainment of disadvantaged students. However, it is too soon to gauge the effectiveness of these activities.

The recommended external review of governance was commissioned and, in part due to the recommendations, the governing body was dissolved and a new smaller local governing body established. The local governing body receives regular updates about the work of the academy, the development of teaching and student progress information through the principal's termly report. A positive move has been for the Chair of the Local Governing Body to attend executive leadership team meetings. Consequently, the Chair of the Local Governing Body is well informed and he states this has helped to improve his confidence and ability to question senior leaders. However, the need to develop their ability to challenge the work of senior leaders remains a priority for governors.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Training, guidance and support for teachers better matches the academy's priorities and the needs of teachers. For example, training on more effective questioning was seen to be leading to better questioning of students in some of the teaching and learning observed.
- Teachers say they value the training and the impact it is having on their confidence. The quality of teaching is improving because better planning of lessons is helping to ensure that more of the work set challenges the most able students.

- The assessment and tracking of students' attainment confirm that improvements are being secured and rates of progress are improving overall.
- Attendance has improved and the proportion of persistent absentees has reduced overall.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Targets for individual students are not always as demanding as they could be. For example, some students who previously attained a Level 5 in mathematics in Key Stage 2 have targets set for grade B at the end of Year 11.
- Lesson planning has improved there is still some variability in the quality of teaching. Although progress in mathematics is improving the school's work has not resulted in rapid narrowing of the gap between disadvantaged students and others. Progress and attainment in mathematics remain a significant priority for the school, particularly for disadvantaged students.
- Scrutiny of students' work showed that there has been some improvement in how teachers are marking work. However, there remains some variation in the quality of feedback which students receive. Students do not always respond to teachers' comments and this is not always followed up.
- A disproportionate number of students who have known special educational needs and/or are disadvantaged are regularly sent to the inclusion room. Leaders are aware of this and have recently introduced strategies to support some individual students when they find learning difficult. However, these changes are too new to demonstrate impact.

External support

The academy continues to make use of support from the sponsor. For example, support for the head of mathematics is helping to bring about improvements to the quality of teaching.