

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

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 6188524

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566863

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email:jbennett@cfbt.com



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Dr Rowena Blencowe
Trentham High School
Allerton Road
Trentham
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 8PQ

Dear Dr Blencowe

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Trentham High School, Stoke-on-Trent

Following my visit to your school on 26 January 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, students, the Chair and another member of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and current progress data were evaluated. A learning walk, involving short visits to a range of lessons was undertaken with the headteacher.

Main findings

The headteacher's strong leadership is ensuring the school is moving forward with focus and determination. Her relentless drive to improve the school and maintain the pace and rigour of actions is having a significant impact on the performance of the school. Leadership capacity overall is growing as the effectiveness of other senior leaders and middle leaders improves. All leaders now have clear roles and responsibilities and understand the headteacher's vision for the school and how their individual responsibilities contribute to it. Performance management targets are now linked to students' progress so that all staff are accountable and responsible for ensuring students' achievement improves.

The quality of data is much improved. As a result, staff can now identify underachievement more promptly, can introduce interventions more quickly and can plan lessons to meet individual students' needs more effectively. Rigorous monitoring systems are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and the progress students are making. Personalised professional development supports teachers who need to improve their practice. Improved cohesiveness of academic and pastoral support provides a more 'joined-up' approach to promoting students' progress and identifying barriers. Although all of these strategies are beginning to have a positive impact, teaching still needs to improve further so that all teaching is at least good, more students need to make the progress expected of them and the gaps between disadvantaged and other students need to narrow further and ultimately close.

To ensure the progress students make in Year 7 is accelerated, transition arrangements with feeder primary schools are a focus for improvement. The recent establishment of the Trentham Learning Partnership with the school's two feeder primary schools aims to develop this further. A stronger focus on improving literacy skills and promoting good progress generally at Key Stage 3 aims to enable students to do as well as they should.

Significant changes to the governing body have taken place both in terms of membership and structure. As a result, governors now have the skills, and the knowledge and understanding to both challenge and support leaders.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

External support is good. The local authority has provided training and support for the governing body. It brokers tailored support to develop the school further, the nature of the support being decided jointly with the headteacher. Additional support is provided by local high performing schools. All forms of external support are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of leadership and teaching and on students' achievement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Stoke-on-Trent.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates

Her Majesty's Inspector