

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



27 February 2015

Dr Cathy Taylor
Principal
Thomas Ferens Academy
540 Hall Road
Hull
HU6 9BP

Dear Dr Taylor

Special measures monitoring inspection of Thomas Ferens Academy

Following my visit with Christine Kennedy, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 25 and 26 February 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 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 June 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 Chair of the Governing Body and the Director, Children, Young People and Family Services for Kingston upon Hull City.

Yours sincerely

Tanya Harber Stuart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Swiftly improve the quality of all teaching so that it is at least consistently good and enables all groups of students to make rapid improvements in achievement, especially in English and mathematics, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of what students can achieve to drive up standards for all groups of students so that none underachieves
 - measure the progress and understanding of students regularly and accurately to ascertain when they are ready to move on to their next stage of learning
 - mark students' books regularly in order to provide them with the advice they need to improve their work and learning
 - set high standards for the presentation and organisation of students' work
 - give greater opportunities for students to write at length and, in particular, encourage boys to do so
 - provide regular and effective homework to drive up achievement
 - use the support of teaching assistants more effectively to rapidly improve standards for those students supported by the pupil premium and those with special educational needs.

- Swiftly improve students' behaviour and safety, including their attendance, by developing effective practices to:
 - reduce the number of students who are regularly absent from the academy, particularly those supported by the pupil premium and those with disabilities or special educational needs
 - eradicate bullying so students stay safe and feel safe
 - reduce overall levels of student exclusion from the academy to at least average or better
 - reduce persistent low-level disruption and instances of misbehaviour so that learning improves
 - eradicate incidents of some students' disregard for the safety of others.

- Rapidly improve the impact of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, by ensuring they:
 - eradicate inadequate teaching and improve that which requires improvement
 - develop effective plans and targets for improvement that have a clear measurable focus on improving achievement, the quality of teaching and students' behaviour and safety
 - have a sharper focus on closing gaps in achievement between different groups of students
 - raise attainment for those students with special educational needs and ensure the additional government funding is spent effectively to raise the achievement of those students eligible for further support
 - ensure that information is analysed effectively to determine the impact of pupil premium spending in raising achievement

- ensure that all subject leaders are fully accountable for and closely check on learning within their subjects, including scrutinising the quality of students' work, in order to accelerate the progress for all students
- take the full range of information available into account, particularly the progress students make over time, when judging the overall quality of teaching
- provide governors with clear responses to their questions at all times to enable them to hold the academy to account for its performance.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 February 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, vice-Principal, assistant vice-Principals, the Chair of the Governing Body, an additional governor and members of staff who have responsibility for subjects (middle leaders). Another group of staff who have no subject responsibilities was met with. Inspectors also met formally with two groups of students and spoke to students informally at social times.

Inspectors observed 23 parts of lessons, 17 of which were done jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Additional short visits were made to classrooms to check on behaviour. An assembly and tutor periods were observed.

Context

Sirius Academy is continuing to support Thomas Ferens Academy (TFA). Various members of the senior leadership team of Sirius Academy are now working at TFA. Some staff left TFA at the end of December 2014 and they have been replaced. Two liaison officers, to support attendance, have been appointed as has a coordinator to support students who speak English as an additional language.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The academy data show that the proportion of students expected to achieve five A* to C grades at GCSE including mathematics and English is on track to rise considerably this year. The academy is using the more reliable data it has on the progress made by students to provide bespoke packages of support for Year 11. These packages include residential trips and lessons at the end of the academy day. Students in Year 11 are receiving very targeted support in tutor time to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in English, mathematics, science and history. As a result, the progress made by all groups of students is improving. The gaps in performance between different groups of students are narrowing especially between those students supported by the pupil premium (additional government money) and their peers.

In Year 10 the curriculum has been changed to provide students with a more appropriate education. Well thought through plans mean students will have their workload spaced out throughout their GCSE courses. However, there has not just been a focus at Key Stage 4. Staff are aware of the need to track carefully the achievement of all students and work is being more accurately targeted. For example, the English department has identified the most able students in Year 8 as needing more challenge and are altering the English curriculum to provide this.

Part of the Year 7 catch-up money was used to fund an initiative with the 'KC Stadium'. Students participated in a day called 'from supporter to reporter', which

developed their literacy skills. The students had to present their work to the governing body, which, as a result of the presentations, is funding additional days.

The quality of teaching

In some lessons teachers have high expectations of what students can do and the progress they will make. Students rise to these expectations, work hard and achieve well. Their progress is regularly monitored and work is altered when it is appropriate. In these lessons the students behave well and they are proud of their work.

However, in many lessons the expectations staff have of students are too low. The focus in these lessons is often on the work the students need to complete, regardless of whether it is appropriate or will allow the students to make good or better progress. Often, all the students are asked to complete the same work. This work is too easy for some students and too difficult for others. In many instances students then engage in low-level disruptive behaviour, such as chatting.

Marking is more regular. Comments made by teachers on students' work are more specific and explain exactly what the students need to do to improve their work. However, not all marking is of this standard and some teachers write comments such as 'include more detail', which do not help the students understand what they need to do.

There are more opportunities for students to write at length. An audit has been completed which shows where all these opportunities are. In books there are more extended pieces of work, but the quantity and quality of this work are inconsistent. More homework is being set and in some subjects it is supporting learning.

The impact of the work of teaching assistants is variable. In some lessons teaching assistants are integral to the students' learning. These teaching assistants support the students, ask challenging questions and make sure the students are guided through the work. However, in other lessons teaching assistants have a much less focused role and spend much time dealing with low-level behaviour.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

More students are attending each day. Part of the pupil premium money is funding one of the liaison officers. The two liaison officers are developing supportive relationships with families and students and, as a result, more students supported by the pupil premium are attending regularly. There are still too many students who are persistently absent, but the proportion of students persistently absent is falling. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities have better attendance.

The proportion of fixed term exclusions has fallen significantly. In addition, the number of students who are being repeatedly excluded has reduced to almost zero. This is because of the work being done with families and students to tackle the reasons why students were being excluded, rather than just excluding them.

There is still some prejudicial bullying, particularly name-calling, but students say there is far less bullying than there was. When bullying does occur students know what to do and action is taken. Students feel safer at TFA because the behaviour of all students has improved.

Around the academy students are respectful, courteous and polite. There is very little litter and students take care of the academy buildings. However, some students do not turn up to lessons with the right equipment, this slows the pace of the lesson as time is spent dealing with handing out rulers, pens and pencils. In some lessons teachers use the behaviour policy very effectively to deal with any possible incidents of off-task behaviour. In other lessons students engage in low-level disruptive behaviour and they are not challenged to behave as effectively.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The action plans have been shared with staff and governors. Staff understand what needs to happen and what they need to do to make sure students make better progress. A well thought through programme of professional development to support improvements in teaching is in place and many staff attend the voluntary sessions, as well as the compulsory ones. This programme is developing the quality of teaching, but there are still areas which need improving. Members of the teaching and learning group feedback into departmental meetings and there is more of a focus in departmental meetings on teaching and students' progress than on administrative aspects.

Middle leaders are much more involved in checking the quality of the work in their departments. Middle leaders look at the work produced by students and the quality of the marking done by members of staff. There is also a focused schedule of lesson observations carried out by senior leaders. All of these aspects are used to make judgements about the quality of teaching and progress made by students. However, some leaders are over-optimistic in their views.

Governors are much more aware of what is happening at TFA. The data presented to the governing body are much more precise and easier to understand because of the format used.

External support

The external support provided by Sirius Academy is pivotal in the improvements being made at TFA. Staff at TFA appreciate the support they are being given and the focused direction being taken by senior leaders. This is enabling middle leaders to lead their departments more effectively and, as a result, students are beginning to make more progress. Students also appreciate the leadership provided by Sirius Academy and can cite many examples of how TFA has improved since the last monitoring inspection.