

Tribal
Kings Orchard
One Queen Street
Bristol
BS2 0HQ

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5359
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com



26 February 2015

Mr Colin Taylor
Oakmeeds Community College
Station Road
Burgess Hill
West Sussex
RH15 9EA

Dear Mr Taylor

Special measures monitoring inspection of Oakmeeds Community College

Following my visit with Victor Chaffey and David Howley, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 24 and 25 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third 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 school may appoint three newly qualified teachers, one in mathematics, one in English and one other 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's Services for West Sussex.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Anders

Associate Inspector

Appointed as an Additional Inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that teachers:
 - have much higher expectations of what students can achieve, especially the most able, those in receipt of the pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs
 - plan lessons that are more challenging, so that all students make at least good progress from their starting points
 - check students' progress more often during lessons to ensure that activities meet the needs of all and adapt work when necessary to do so
 - use information about students' abilities accurately so that work is set at the correct level, especially for those who learn most quickly
 - mark all work regularly and accurately, giving students clear feedback that helps them to improve their work, especially in mathematics and science, and require students to respond to the advice given.
- Raise standards and improve the progress of all groups of students in a range of subjects, particularly English, mathematics and science, by:
 - developing teachers' knowledge and understanding of the information they have about students' progress and how best to use it in planning and teaching.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance by ensuring that:
 - the school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements
 - leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance
 - leaders, including subject leaders, check rigorously on the quality of teaching and use information about students' progress more effectively so that judgements made about teaching accurately reflect students' achievement
 - governors challenge senior leaders and hold them more effectively to account for the quality of teaching and the achievement of all groups of students
 - pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is used more effectively to accelerate the progress of eligible students so that the attainment gaps with their peers in school and nationally are closed rapidly
 - teachers are held to account for planning lessons which meet students' different needs.

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

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 governance may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 February 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and groups of students. Inspectors also spoke with the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and the headteacher of a local teaching school. Inspectors observed 21 lessons, six of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders, and two assemblies. Inspectors checked the school's procedures to keep students safe and secure. Inspectors looked at a range of students' work and spoke with students informally.

Context

There have been further changes in staff since the last inspection, with four staff leaving. Six teachers joined the school, five of these posts are temporary. Three members of support staff started work at the school, two of whom are classroom assistants. The school is currently consulting about conversion to academy status through sponsorship by a local university.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Achievement by students at the school is rising. Trial examinations and other assessments show the increasing rate of progress compared with last year. Leaders and teachers work with other schools to check their assessments are correct in order to predict accurately. Teachers' assessment of students' current grades in English, mathematics and science is higher this year than last and external validation by the local authority and teaching school supports the school's view of improvement.

The new system of goal setting is becoming established. Leaders want targets to increase students' ambition so that students' and teachers' aspirations match their own. Students discuss targets with teachers and increase their personal goals in particular subjects when they feel it appropriate. While the principle of increasing students' sense of responsibility for their progress is right, there is still some confusion over the process. As a result, inconsistencies have emerged and leaders are working to resolve these. It is too early to link this approach to the improved progress being made.

All teachers identify students who need extra support in their lessons and plan their teaching to help them make more progress towards their goals. Many students who fall behind now receive further support to help them catch up. Students with special educational needs are better supported by additional staff who have been recruited and trained by the special educational needs coordinator. Their impact in the classroom is more pronounced when the teacher is able to discuss the lesson in advance. Students making slower progress have additional support, carefully

identified to meet their needs. Students with lower literacy levels get help to improve their reading from staff who make time each morning to support them.

Some groups of students are still making less progress than their peers. Disadvantaged students and those whose attendance is low make significantly less progress than other students. Leaders are working to increase the engagement of these students and their families to ensure students' achievement increases. For example, a learning mentor works with disadvantaged students whose attendance is also poor, to identify and address barriers to their achievement. It is too early to identify improvements as a result of this mentoring.

The quality of teaching

Teachers' commitment to improving the quality of practice is evident through hard work across the school. The impact of teaching is greatest where teachers use available information to inform and structure lessons and activities. Teachers ensure their marking guides decisions about what to teach next, as well as showing students where they can improve their knowledge and skills. In-depth questioning, pushing students to demonstrate their good understanding and grasp of the topic studied, adds to students' improving rate of progress over time. When present, high expectations and challenging work further engage students. In these lessons, teachers' subject knowledge and high expectations lead to demanding targets for students.

A sharp focus on improving outcomes for the most able students is working. A group of more-able Key Stage 4 students spoke at length about the improvements in teaching which have taken place in the last year. It is increasingly a strength of the school that students know their levels and grades and what they need to do to make further improvement. The students enthused about clearer marking and feedback and the targets they expect to reach. One student summed this up by saying, 'Top sets are being pushed hard.'

Teachers' focus on ensuring that all lessons meet the needs of each student was a feature of the lessons seen. The use of level and grade criteria at frequent points through each lesson allows students to assess themselves and their peers and identify what they should aim to do next. Key vocabulary is also used extensively to help build students' knowledge and understanding.

Some teachers do not take enough account of the different abilities of students in the class. As a result, students lose interest and become distracted. In some cases, students' lack of involvement in lessons can prevent others from learning. In contrast, in the best lessons, teacher-student relationships and classroom management create a calm environment students enjoy; their enjoyment in learning also leads to good progress. In these lessons, the teacher also adapts the pace and activities as the learning progresses.

The presentation of students' work has improved and is clearly valued by staff through regular marking, but a high standard is not expected everywhere. High quality extended writing and supportive feedback in history is a particular strength. The detailed analysis of the skills used in essay writing as students study for GCSE examinations ensures that the progress made by students is rapid.

Improving teaching is leading to higher levels of achievement, increased rates of progress and smaller gaps between groups of students. The focus on making sure all lessons include frequent reference to levels and grades, with clear language used to explain what is required to reach the next level or grade, is also accelerating progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Staff care for the students well, with use of external agencies where additional skills are required to support. Attendance overall is about average. However, attendance for disabled students and those with special educational needs remains significantly lower than average.

Most students are punctual to lessons and well prepared to learn. Teachers note that missing equipment is now much less of a concern. The behaviour of students in lessons is often exemplary. However, there are occasions when students' inattention slows the pace of learning and this is the result of teaching which is less engaging. Incidents of poor behaviour are rigorously recorded by teachers and monitored by leaders. As a result of leaders tracking students' misdemeanours, leaders gain a better picture of students' attitudes to learning and additional areas for improvement are identified, for example incomplete or missing homework.

The school's work to keep students safe and secure is effective. Parents say that their children feel safe and happy; this is supported by the views of the students themselves. Students know about the various forms of bullying and said that any bullying in school tended to be name calling. The students spoken to said that teachers dealt with this effectively.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the last inspection, leaders have increased the consistency of practice across the school. This has improved the quality of teaching and the rate at which students progress in their learning. Staff expectations have risen too in many areas and, as a result, students' achievement has increased this year. Leaders' judgements about improvements in the quality of teaching match those noted by local authority advisers and inspectors.

Leaders now ensure that there is more effective support for disadvantaged students. A wide range of interventions supports students who are not making expected progress and they are beginning to catch up in their learning.

Leadership of mathematics is now a strength. Changes in the leadership and management of mathematics have resulted in increased levels of achievement through the drive to improve marking, accuracy of assessment and more ambitious targets. In Year 11, the classes have been reorganised to ensure students receive extra teaching time on the areas of the subject where they struggle most. The leader of humanities has developed teaching of extended writing skills which means that students now make better progress in history too. In both these areas, leaders have benefited from coaching and support by specialist leaders of education from a local teaching school.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have focused on increasing staff levels in English and mathematics in the short term to boost achievement and make up lost ground in attainment. Current progress by students is better than in the past in both these subject areas.

The coordinator of special educational needs has a clear focus on increasing rates of progress and levels of expectation. Additional staff have been recruited to broaden the support and set up new interventions, for example in one-to-one withdrawal support for English and mathematics. Students supported in this way are making better progress.

Leaders make good use of external support with teachers' professional training, in particular that provided by a local teaching school. A comprehensive programme of lesson observation and 'book looks' to evaluate regularly the quality of teaching adds to the impact on practice. This also gives all leaders an accurate and realistic understanding of the quality of classroom practice. They are fully aware that, whilst there is now substantial good practice, consolidation of the improvements to teaching is required.

School leaders carefully track the spending of additional funding for disadvantaged students. Work has begun to evaluate the impact of the different strategies that are funded to guide future interventions. The progress made by disadvantaged students has increased, although their level of achievement is still less than their peers. The funding also allows access to the full extra curriculum that is offered and trips away from the school.

Governors use increased contact with the different departments in the school to become better informed about progress and areas for improvement. Governors are paired with subject areas and through termly visits they learn about the latest developments and provide feedback for other governors. Four governors are a part of the strategic group, which also includes the local authority and teaching school headteacher, which evaluates the progress made in each 30 day improvement cycle. As a result, their view of the school's provision is much more accurate. Governors are also able to contribute, through this group, to the actions agreed for subsequent improvement cycles.

Governors have begun the process of becoming an academy, with a local university as the sponsor. They are consulting staff, parents, and the local community.

External support

The school continues to be well supported by the local authority and the Millais Teaching School. A recent joint leadership conference inspired a number of school leaders to think more deeply about their roles. Senior staff, including the teaching school's headteacher, continue to work with the school. Staff from the school also visit the teaching school for further training and development. Staff identify this support, training and development as an important part of the ongoing improvement. The local authority continues to have a monitoring role, rightly checking the work of both the school and the difference being made by the teaching school's support.