

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566857

**Direct F** 01695 729320

**Direct email:** jkinsman@cftb.com

24 April 2015

Mr Gareth Jones  
Interim Headteacher  
Sandon Business and Enterprise College  
Sandon Road  
Meir  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST3 7DF

Dear Mr Jones

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Sandon Business and Enterprise College**

Following my visit to your school on 23 April 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2015.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim headteacher and an assistant headteacher, the Chair and one other representative of the Governing Body, two representatives of the local authority and a representative of the school's intended academy sponsor. The local authority's statement of action and the combined school and local authority action plan were evaluated along with records of fortnightly progress board meetings, a review of the mathematics department and recent minutes of governing body meetings.

### **Context**

Since the inspection, the headteacher and one other senior leader have left the school and the interim headteacher's position has been confirmed until the end of

this academic year. The school is actively pursuing academy status with the Ormiston Academies Trust, which already sponsors two local secondary schools, as the preferred sponsor. An academy order has been granted and the school intends to convert from September 2015.

There has been a review of the school's leadership at both senior and middle levels, resulting in a restructuring that is currently being implemented.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

The interim headteacher has ensured a swift, energetic and robust response to the school being judged to require special measures. Indeed, many actions began before the inspection because of his evaluation of the school's position and the likelihood of it being judged as inadequate. This honest and accurate self-evaluation has led to a clear, detailed and appropriate improvement plan.

The local authority acted swiftly in response to the summer 2015 examination results in commissioning the interim headteacher's services from the Ormiston Sir Stanley Matthews Academy at the end of October 2014. The local authority's support prior to, and following, the inspection has been valued by the school as has its continued support for the conversion of the school into an academy.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium (additional government money) is scheduled to take place shortly as well as external reviews of teaching and learning and of leadership and management. An external review of governance that was due to be undertaken has been postponed pending the school's conversion to an academy.

The combined local authority and school action plan shows urgency, is detailed and clearly addresses the main issues identified in the inspection report. The plan contains success criteria and milestones. However, many of these are written as tasks and not as measurable data: for example, in terms of student attainment, progress, attendance and the quality of teaching. The school has targets for these areas, but has yet to include them in its written plan. Committing these targets and intermediate milestones to the plan would better enable leaders and others to measure the success of the actions being taken.

At fortnightly progress board meetings, the school's senior leaders, local authority representatives and a Chair of the Governing Body from a neighbouring school, scrutinise the action plan, monitor its progress and evaluate its success to date.

Leaders have made a number of changes in the school that are already beginning to show early signs of impact. Safeguarding procedures, criticised in the inspection report, are now robust. The insistence on consistent rules, routines and expectations for students and staff has already led to a tangible improvement in the learning culture in the school. Students, staff, parents, governors and the local authority have welcomed these changes and the interim headteacher's leadership commands the respect of these key stakeholders as well as the Ormiston Academies Trust. They also express a confidence that his continued leadership will result in speedy and significant improvement at Sandon College.

Governors are now better able to support and challenge the school's leaders because the interim headteacher has ensured that they are presented with clear, timely and accurate information in an open manner. Governors have also undertaken training to support them in their role. As the school goes forward and becomes an academy, the governing body is likely to need ongoing support if it is to fulfil its duty to be a critical friend to the school's leadership.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

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

The combined school and local authority action plan is fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Acting Executive Director - People for Stoke-on-Trent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams

**Her Majesty's Inspector**