

Tribal
Kings Orchard
1 Queen Street
Bristol, BS2 0HQ

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

Direct T 0117 3115307
rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com

2 June 2015

Mrs A Robin-Jones
The Acting Headteacher
Cleeve School
Two Hedges Road
Cheltenham
GL52 8AE

Dear Mrs Robin-Jones

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Cleeve School

Following my visit with Tom Winskill Her Majesty's Inspector to your academy on 1 June 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The inspection also focused on relevant aspects of the quality of leadership and management, including governance.

Evidence

Inspectors met with the acting headteacher, all other members of the academy's senior leadership team, the subject leaders for English and mathematics and a separate group of other subject leaders. Meetings were held with two separate groups of disadvantaged students who brought their work in English and mathematics so that inspectors could discuss this with them. Separate meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the governor with responsibility for disadvantaged students and the governor with oversight of the academy's arrangements for safeguarding students. Inspectors also scrutinised the single central record, documents relating to the achievement of disadvantaged students and safeguarding, records of meetings of the governing body and other records, such as those relating to the monitoring of the quality of teaching. The inspectors also undertook a series of visits to lessons with the acting headteacher and other senior staff. During these visits, inspectors looked at the information about the current achievement of disadvantaged and other students in the class, looked at students' work and talked to students about it.

Context

There has been a number of key changes to the academy's leadership since the last inspection in October 2012. Many of these changes have taken place during the current academic year. The previous headteacher left the school in July 2014. The acting headteacher, the academy's deputy headteacher, took on this role from 1 September 2014. A new headteacher has been appointed to take up post on 1 September 2015. An assistant headteacher left the academy at the end of December 2014 and has not been replaced. Two members of the senior leadership team took up their posts in September 2014. There have also been changes to the organisation of the governing body to provide more direct accountability for specific aspects of the academy's work.

The academy is in a partnership, known as CCT, with two other secondary schools, Tewkesbury School and Chipping Campden School. The partnership includes offsite provision as an alternative to permanent exclusion, Abbey View, which is now a free school. The schools have an additional partnership with a further education college, Gloucestershire College, that provides a centre for vocational courses, known as Launchpad. Around 30 students in Years 10 and 11 attend the centre for part of the week; about one third of these are disadvantaged students. This provision will not be available from the start of the next academic year, although Year 10 students currently at the centre will complete their courses next year. The school has adapted its curriculum for 2015/16 to accommodate this change.

The cohort of disadvantaged students who completed Year 11 in 2014 was different to those currently in the academy in all year groups. The 2014 cohort was much smaller, with only 17 disadvantaged students on the academy roll. It contained a number of students on the academy roll, but who did not attend regularly, if at all. Currently, each year group in the academy has around 40 disadvantaged students and the profile of this group, in terms of their prior attainment and other characteristics, is very similar to the rest of the year group.

The achievement of disadvantaged students

In 2014, the achievement of disadvantaged students was not good enough. The proportion making good progress in English and mathematics was much smaller than their peers and below the national average for disadvantaged students. In contrast, the achievement of those students who were not disadvantaged was higher than national levels.

Based on the academy's most recent assessment information, disadvantaged students currently in Year 11 are doing much better than the previous cohort when compared with their peers and with national averages. The achievement of all students has improved, but the achievement of disadvantaged students has improved further so that the gaps in achievement have narrowed significantly. In both English and mathematics the gaps are less than half the 2014 levels. In a wide

range of other subjects, there are no discernible gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged students and that of their peers. These improvements are clear in students' work. In the lessons visited, the current achievement data showed that the progress being made by disadvantaged students is in line with that of others in the class. Academy leaders undertake rigorous checks to ensure that all assessment information is reliable and accurate. In other year groups, for example in Year 10, it is clear that the achievement gaps in English and mathematics continue to narrow as the achievement of disadvantaged students improves further.

Students, including those disadvantaged, know their targets and current level of achievement. Most are clear about what they need to do to achieve their targets and what to do to improve, where necessary. However, in some cases the targets do not seem to be as challenging as they could be.

A minority of those disadvantaged students who completed Year 11 in 2014 entered the academy's sixth form. Those that did are achieving well and in line with their peers. All of the others took up courses in a further education provider, an apprenticeship or employment with training. Many progressed to level 3 courses. A much higher proportion of the disadvantaged students currently in Year 11, more than half, have applied to join the academy's sixth form. This compares well with the proportion of other students, around 60%, who have applied to join the sixth form. Those disadvantaged students not planning to join the sixth form have responded well to good and well-focused careers guidance and have applied to further education colleges or for an apprenticeship. Whilst academic achievement in the academy sixth form is generally high, in a range of subjects there is too wide a variation in the achievement of students with similar starting points. Currently, the academy does not analyse this to check the extent to which this applies to disadvantaged students.

In 2014, the attendance of disadvantaged students was below that of their peers, which itself was below the national average, and lower than for this group of students nationally. About one in four disadvantaged students was persistently absent. The attendance of all students, including those disadvantaged, has improved significantly this year to be in line with the national figure. The number of disadvantaged students persistently absent has also fallen significantly. The attendance of disadvantaged students in the sixth form has improved markedly. The academy's intensive work with parents, as well as with students, has been a key factor in raising attendance. Careful consideration is given to those who are young carers and those with particular circumstances that can affect their attendance and punctuality. Each student knows their current attendance level and what they need to do to improve or sustain a good level.

Those disadvantaged students who met with inspectors report that there are clear and consistently used arrangements for 'praise and sanctions'. However, while they agree that a detention and the loss of their own time is an effective sanction, they do not feel that the rewards for positive actions have the same 'status'.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The academy's leaders and governors undertook a detailed and thorough review of the achievement of disadvantaged students following the 2014 results. Reviews were also undertaken in key subject and other areas, including in English, mathematics, the sixth form and the alternative and college-based provision. Following the review, leaders have instigated a range of actions to raise the achievement of disadvantaged students. Many of these actions apply to all students, whilst others are specifically related to the attendance, behaviour and achievement of disadvantaged students. The academy has a relentless focus on students as individuals and on identifying, and supporting students to overcome, any barriers to their learning. While this has a positive impact on all students, it is of particular benefit to disadvantaged students, some of whom have complex needs. As a result, the attendance and achievement of disadvantaged students have risen, and continue to rise, faster than that of their peers.

The progress of individuals and groups of students is checked carefully. Disadvantaged students' progress is reviewed regularly by subject, year group and senior leaders. The academy has adopted a more 'proactive' approach to the use of assessment information, using the analysis of these data to identify potential concerns early so that swift and effective actions can be taken. This approach also enables well-coordinated support to be given to any disadvantaged students whose attendance, behaviour or progress seems to be affected by their personal circumstances.

Leaders have introduced more rigorous arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching. The quality of teaching is evaluated through lesson observations, checking students' progress and learning walks undertaken by senior staff and subject leaders, sometimes accompanied by governors. The observations and learning walks focus on key aspects of teaching, including the progress and achievement of disadvantaged students. Leaders use the outcomes from the monitoring of teaching well to plan targeted professional development for teachers. For example, this year there has been a focus on ensuring that all teachers carefully match the work they set to the current achievement and longer-term targets of individual students. This has been instrumental in making sure that disadvantaged students make better progress to achieve their potential.

All teachers identify the disadvantaged students in their classes in their lesson and seating plans. This includes information on these students' current achievement and targets. Many teachers use this well to check the progress of these students and to make sure the work is challenging. Most are also aware of the wider support provided for some of these students and take account of this in their teaching. The recently introduced pupil premium passport helps with this. Many teachers recognise that building the confidence of many disadvantaged students is a key challenge. They are skilful in using directed questioning well to make sure that these students are fully involved in class discussions. They often use 'comfortable questions' to build this confidence, but then put the student 'on the spot' to enable them to develop

deeper understanding. Developing this use of questioning has been a focus of whole-school professional development. However, a minority of teachers are content when disadvantaged students are on track to achieve their target and do not then provide a higher level of challenge and so limit the students' potential achievement.

Most teachers mark students' work carefully and provide good feedback, so that the students are clear about what they need to do next. Some examples of outstanding marking were seen in the work of disadvantaged students, where the students were provided with clear points about what they had done well and set questions or further pieces of work that challenged them to go even further. However, a significant minority of the disadvantaged students talked to during the visit reported that, in some of their lessons, even when they find the work difficult, they do not receive the support they would like from the teacher. Others feel that the onus is on them to tell the teacher, rather than the teacher checking with them that they understand what to do. The same students also report that when their work is marked the comments often do not make it clear what they did well and what they need to do to improve. Examples of this can be seen in their work.

The academy's approach to supporting disadvantaged students is based on two key principles: 'know them well' and 'be ambitious'. These students are discussed at all subject department, year group, senior staff and governors meetings. A wide range of specific strategies to support disadvantaged students has been introduced this year and these are used flexibly so that they are matched well to individual students' needs. The quality of the 'wrap around care' for those most vulnerable is outstanding, as witnessed by discussions with a number of students. Some examples of highly effective support include:

- in mathematics, always marking disadvantaged students' work first to make sure teachers give them high priority
- in English, and in other subjects, giving very careful consideration to individual disadvantaged students in making seating arrangements and in forming groups for collaborative work
- the sensitive use of the academy's Inspire centre (a resource to help any students falling behind with their work) when disadvantaged students have a period of absence, often due to circumstances that could not be predicted or not within the academy's control, and need somewhere to catch up with their work and receive individual support or when they need somewhere to do their homework
- the use of targeted mentoring to help disadvantaged students overcome particular problems affecting their learning
- visits of senior staff and year leaders to partner primary schools to discuss effective strategies to support specific disadvantaged students
- tutors' and others' regular conversations with disadvantaged students to check their feelings and to ensure that any changes in their circumstances are known about.

Governors are fully aware of the importance of the actions the academy has taken, and is taking, to raise the achievement of disadvantaged students. They frequently check on the impact of these actions on improving the attendance, behaviour and achievement of these students. They are well informed, so can ask the challenging questions needed to hold senior and middle leaders to account. Currently, governors' analysis of the allocation of the pupil premium funding (additional funding for disadvantaged students) and the impact of the actions taken on students' achievement are undertaken by separate sub-committees. This means that whilst it is clear that the actions taken have had a positive impact, it is difficult to evaluate, for example, what impact the spending on teaching assistants has on raising the achievement of specific disadvantaged students. Governors also hold the academy's senior leaders to account well with regard to safeguarding arrangements and child protection processes.

External support

The academy is outward looking and fully prepared to learn from other schools, including those in the partnership as well as others. Senior and middle leaders, and governors, attend events organised by the local authority. Senior and middle leaders effectively incorporate any ideas arising from these events and contact with other schools with those developed within the academy and the impact of this can be seen in the improvements made this year. The subject leaders for English and mathematics have been involved in subject meetings with other schools where strategies for raising the attainment of disadvantaged students have been discussed and ideas shared. The academy works well with partner primary schools to evaluate approaches to supporting disadvantaged students.

The strengths in the school's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged students effectively to achieve their potential are:

- the wide range of practical approaches that underpin the academy's key principles to raise the achievement of disadvantaged students: 'know them well' and 'be ambitious'
- the flexibility in the application of these actions to ensure that they are best suited to the needs of individual students
- the high quality of the well-coordinated support for individual disadvantaged students that is highly sensitive to their personal circumstances
- the frequent conversations with individual disadvantaged students to ensure that their views are fully taken into account
- the intensity of the focus on disadvantaged students in tracking their progress, checking the quality of teaching and frequent discussions in meetings at all levels to evaluate the impact of the actions taken

- governors' regular checking of improvements in the achievement of disadvantaged students so that senior leaders are held to account
- ensuring that disadvantaged students receive high-quality careers guidance to enable them to make well-informed decisions about post-16 programmes of study.

The weaknesses in the school's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged students effectively to achieve their potential are:

- the inconsistency in teachers' use of the information teachers have about each disadvantaged student to provide them with high-quality support, feedback on their work and challenge to enable them to do as well as they can
- the lack of an overall governors' report on the impact of pupil premium funding on raising the achievement of disadvantaged students.

Priorities for further improvement

- Eliminating the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching by building on the excellent practice that exists and sharing the strategies used by the best teachers.
- Ensuring that the governing body produces an evaluative report on the impact of the additional funding for disadvantaged students.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire, to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector