

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 566937

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: jsimmons@cfbt.com



17 June 2015

Mr Kevin McDermott
Principal
University of Chester CE Academy
164 Whitby Road
Ellesmere Port
Cheshire
CH65 6EA

Dear Mr McDermott

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to University of Chester CE Academy, Cheshire West and Chester

Following my visit to your school on 16 June 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 March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and members of the local governing body are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

■ Ensure that:

- the academy's action plan includes the intended impact of each action on the achievement of each key group, notably boys and disadvantaged students
- all teachers set appropriately challenging next steps when feeding back to students, especially the most able, on their learning
- all teachers have high expectations of the presentation of students' written work.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, as Principal, other senior and middle leaders, the Head of Sixth Form, the Chair and another representative of the local Governing Body. I also met with the Director of School Improvement for the University of Chester Academy Trust, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The academy's improvement plan was evaluated and I checked the single central record, which I found to meet all requirements. I made a brief tour of the academy and scrutinised a range of documentation, including information on students' progress and records of visits from St John Plessington Teaching School Alliance, which has been supporting aspects of the school's work. I also looked at the performance management policy and records of observation of the quality of teaching. Additionally, I considered a sample of written work across Year 9, Year 10 and Year 11 in a range of subjects.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection in March 2015, two teachers have joined the school. There have been no other staffing changes.

Main findings

In the short time since the last section 5 inspection the school has made a very strong start to tackle, at a rapid pace, the recommendations that inspectors left with the school. You, senior leaders and governors have adopted a very systematic, well phased and coherent approach. It is underpinned by an action plan that is very capable of improving the academy quickly to good. Nevertheless, you should ensure that for each action, the desired impact on students' progress is stated.

You have set in place policies that are improving the academy, through the high quality professional development of existing teachers and leaders. Your systems for the improvement of teaching are supportive yet very challenging, backed up by strong quality assurance. As a result, you have swiftly eradicated all but a few occasional examples of inadequate teaching. You and the governors have been fearless in removing teachers whose practice fails to improve.

Inspection evidence shows that your marking policy is consistently applied by most teachers. The routine dialogue between teachers and students on their learning is apparent in books seen. However, some teachers do not comment often enough on poorly presented work. Occasionally, students' next steps in learning could be more challenging, especially for the most able.

You have strengthened and energised the leadership and management of the academy by making several new appointments at senior and middle leader level. All leaders and teachers share an exceptionally cohesive vision for the academy's rapid improvement. You are all united in your confidence and commitment to drive this

improvement as quickly as possible. Middle leaders are enthusiastic and excited by the impact their roles are beginning to have upon students' achievement. They greatly appreciate the regular opportunities they have to work together and share good and innovative practice within and beyond the academy.

The clearest impact of this determined approach is seen in the school's own information on students' current progress throughout the school. Your very robust tracking systems show that students in Year 11 are set to improve their outcomes significantly in the 2015 GCSE examinations. Year 10 students are on track for similar or higher rises in achievement in the 2016 examinations.

The academy recognises the need to raise the profile of the sixth form and many of the successful measures from Key Stage 4 are being successfully adapted to the sixth form. The academy's commitment to providing sixth form education for its community is seen in the recent appointment of the Head of Sixth Form to the senior leadership team.

The local Governing Body is very ably led by a National Leader of Governance. She provides a wealth of experience in her role. Members of the local governing body are very knowledgeable about the academy's priorities and know exactly what the academy needs to do to improve further. They provide a very rigorous challenge to senior leaders.

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

External support

The school has drawn very effectively on the support negotiated by the University of Chester Academy Trust from the St John Plessington Teaching School Alliance. The academy has benefited from this support in implementing new, more rigorous management processes. However, the academy's rapid development is best seen in the fact that this support has already been greatly reduced, in keeping with the academy's increasing capacity to sustain its own improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Cheshire West and Chester and as below.

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority: Chair of local Governing Body/ University of Chester Academies Trust
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk
- Anglican Diocese of Chester
- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]