

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

**Direct T** 0117 311 5246  
**Direct F** 0117 315 0430  
**Direct email:** Sara.Whalley@tribalgroup.com



18 June 2015

Mr S Colledge  
Interim Principal  
Gloucester Academy  
Painswick Road  
Gloucester  
GL4 6RN

Dear Mr Colledge

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Gloucester Academy**

Following my visit with David Bowles and Sheila Boyle, Additional Inspectors to your academy on 16 and 17 June 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 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 continue to 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 and the Chair of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2014**

- Raise achievement by improving teaching to good or better levels across the academy, ensuring that:
  - teachers demand higher standards of work from their students during lessons and in the written tasks they set
  - students' work is accurately assessed and that new work planned enables them to make good or better progress
  - students' work is marked regularly with comments that help students to improve their work and increase the progress they make
  - the progress made by different groups of students is checked regularly against the quality of teaching they receive.
- Improve the impact of leaders at all levels on raising students' achievement, particularly that of the most able, by:
  - ensuring that senior leaders have the capacity to deliver improvement priorities
  - checking that the information on students' progress is accurate in all subjects and staff are clear about the capabilities of each student
  - checking that students who are eligible for the government's pupil premium funding receive high calibre support that meets their specific needs
  - promoting literacy skills in all subjects across the academy
  - ensuring that the governing body holds the senior leaders and managers to account for all aspects of the academy's performance.
- Improve behaviour and students' attitudes to learning by:
  - making sure all staff and students understand and adhere to the academy's procedures for managing behaviour
  - ensuring students are engaged productively in lessons and participate actively in their learning.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how it can be improved.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 June 2015**

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with the interim Principal, the chief executive officer of the White Horse Federation and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors had discussions with leaders directly responsible for implementing the post-inspection action plan, departmental leaders and academy staff. An inspector joined a meeting of the governing body. Inspectors met with groups of students formally and during lessons to ascertain their views on learning, behaviour and safety. Academy progress data were reviewed. Inspectors checked the single central record. Inspectors visited 20 part lessons, 12 with the Principal designate, the vice principal and the assistant principal responsible for teachers' professional development. The inspectors reviewed students' work in science and history and a selection of provision plans for disabled students and those with special educational needs.

### **Context**

The sponsorship of the academy moved to the White Horse Federation multi-academy Trust on the 1 March 2015. An interim Principal was appointed on 1 June, following the resignation of the former Principal. Since the April 2014 inspection, 29 members of staff have left the academy. Cover or supply staff taught 33% of lessons in the period between the last inspection visit and 1 June. The federation has recruited experienced leaders into the mathematics, art and design and computing departments. They took up their posts this term. A head of assessment is recruited and, along with eight class teachers, took up post this term. A permanent Principal is appointed and is due to take up post in July.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Students' attainment has continued to improve where there has been stability in teaching. This is particularly the case in English and science. Robust lesson planning, effective interventions and thorough tracking of students' achievements underpin students' progress in English across a range of skills. Students continue to improve in reading across the academy as result of skilled teaching and careful checking on the gains they make towards becoming fluent readers.

The English department has increased its support for teaching in Year 7. This is helping students in Year 7 catch up lost ground in their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills. This work is leading to an improvement in their writing across other subjects.

Achievement in mathematics is still not secure in Years 7, 8 and 9. There has been an attempt to improve students' mathematical skills but the approach has been piecemeal. There is insufficient oversight or understanding of what has been taught and of the gaps in students' knowledge until this month. The academy-wide weakness in gathering assessment information in this subject means that teachers have remained unclear about students' capabilities in mathematics.

The topics in science taught to students in Years 7, 8 and 9 provide a good balance of practical experiences and theoretical knowledge. The practical and problem-solving approach works well, helping students to reason and apply their knowledge. In science, teaching is improving and lessons are better planned to meet students' abilities and interests. Consequently, students are applying reasoning and scientific knowledge to problem solving much more successfully. As a consequence, attainment is improving and more students are in a position to study science through to GCSE.

Disabled students and those with special educational needs are continuing to make gains in the skills and knowledge consistent with their personal plans. Adults teach students the strategies they need to become effective learners and in turn students make the most of the small-group and individual lessons. They have good access to clubs and social times that help them improve their personal development. In mainstream lessons good progress is not so evident. Teachers do not make the adjustments in their teaching to improve these students' skills when additional adults are not present.

Lesson observations, discussions with leaders and work scrutiny indicate that the most able students across all subjects are not making the progress expected of them. This is a recurring theme of previous visits. The root of the problem is that departmental heads do not have enough information about these students' skills on entry and as they move through the academy. Teachers do not know how well they are achieving against expectations. This combines with inconsistent guidance from leaders on how the curriculum and lesson planning are to be adjusted to cater for their needs.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching remains variable. Some teachers do not manage the lesson time well enough. Teachers are too willing to allow students to opt out in lessons. As a consequence, as the lesson develops, the teachers lower their expectations of students further in an effort to maintain the students' engagement.

The teachers do not have enough information about the students' relative strengths and weaknesses in the subjects they are teaching. As a consequence, they cannot modify their tasks precisely enough. Their questions are not particular enough. For

some students they are too easy and more-able students are disinclined to answer. For others the questions are too hard and so they are reluctant to join in.

Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. Most teachers provide helpful guidance during their lessons on how students can improve their work. Teachers work effectively with supporting adults to encourage discussions that allow students to explore ideas. The majority of teachers are looking for students to develop in-depth answers and they give students time to organise their thinking. There are still teachers who are not asking the harder questions or too readily accept shallow responses.

The marking of students' work remains inconsistent. At its most effective it is regular and comments offer guidance to the students on how to improve and stimulate thinking. There is less evidence that the marking challenges more-able students to raise their aspirations. This is evident even in departments where there is clear guidance provided to all staff. The interactions between students and teachers, in a few lessons in Years 8, 9 and 10, are frequently superficial. The effort of a small number of students often goes unrewarded and the pace of the lesson falters.

Greater consistency in the quality of learning is evident in Year 7, in the small-group teaching of those learning English as an additional language and for disabled students and those with special educational needs. Senior leaders regularly review the impact of programmes used with these students and this informs the lesson planning. The relationships built up between students and adults are effective. Teachers know what each student should be capable of achieving in the lesson and use a range of strategies to support good progress.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Some students continue to test the resolve of staff, for example by delaying moving into lessons or being intentionally rude when talking to teachers. These situations are most prevalent in departments where there has been significant use of cover staff and a lack of presence by departmental leaders.

The previous approach to tackling students' poor behaviour was to impose a fixed-term exclusion. This was unworkable as a long-term strategy. The number of fixed-term exclusions had not reduced substantially and students were missing too much learning. The Trust responded quickly to this situation and introduced a stepped approach to managing poor behaviour. This is working particularly well in the mathematics department. Students were prompt to mathematics lessons and no students were observed being removed from lessons during the inspection.

The most pressing issue facing the academy is the poor attendance rates of a minority of students. The safeguarding and attendance team has improved its

knowledge of the individual circumstances of each student since the last inspection visit. The team works closely with agencies to safeguard those who are not attending. Discussions with students suggest that boring lessons and too many cover lessons demotivate them. The pattern of attendance is such that, by Year 9, the average attendance rates for the year group have fallen well below 90%.

There is a warm welcome for students at the start of the day. However, students report there is very little reward for good behaviour and good work. There is little evidence around the academy that high aspirations are celebrated. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development policy provides guidance on how this aspect of students' learning should be promoted. The implementation of this guidance lacks coherence.

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

The sponsor has moved swiftly to tackle the recommendations following the last inspection visit.

An assessment system linking students' progress to national expectations is now in place and has the potential to raise teachers' aspirations for students. Departmental assessment systems are better focused on accurately measuring students' progress as they move through Years 8 and 9 as well as in Years 10 and 11. A further adjustment to assessing students in Year 7 has also brought a focus on measuring how close to expectations students are, given their starting point on entry to the academy.

The sponsors have worked hard to plug the gaps in subject knowledge and expertise in departments following a significant number of staff leaving the academy. Each department now has a leader. All departments are completing schemes of work that are linked to the GCSE syllabus. With clearer assessment and tracking of academic progress, senior leaders are now better placed to hold subject leaders to account for students' achievements.

The leadership structure has undergone a further change since the last inspection visit. One leader now has overall responsibility for one aspect of academy management. This is avoiding situations where implementation of the action plan was slow and the impact infrequently checked. Staff report that they are happier now there is greater clarity of their roles and responsibilities.

There is more joined-up working between departmental leaders and the welfare team in dealing with students returning from absence and fixed-term exclusions. There are leaders for tracking students' behaviour in both key stages but they have scant knowledge of the students' academic achievement. This creates a gap when helping to raise students' aspirations.

Improvement to teaching and learning within the departments remains patchy. There is not enough consistency of practice due to an incomplete picture in some departments of what is taught and uncertainty about how to measure students' progress. Departmental leaders have not had sufficient focus on the achievement of higher-attaining students in lessons.

The sponsors have ensured that, going into next academic year, students have access to a broad offer that includes at least eight GCSEs. Additional funding, such as the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding, is targeted effectively on students who have fallen behind. The impact of each programme is evaluated regularly by the assistant principal. However, a broad overview of the impact of last year's funding has not been drawn together. Consequently governors find it difficult to report effectively.

Governors continue to take a very keen interest in developments at the academy. They challenge leaders to explain the intended benefits of the recent assessment system and are anxious to embed this from Year 7. They have a good awareness of the improvements in how absence rates are tackled and lend support to new departmental leaders through regular meetings.

### **External support**

The sponsor has provided a robust steer to developments in the recent months, particularly strengthening the curriculum and assessment. The professional development programme conveys greater clarity on the basics of improving teaching, with a focus on making use of assessment and tracking information when planning lessons.

The role of the interim Principal has been crucial in maintaining stability through another period of change. The priorities for further development are clearly understood by the interim Principal, and conveyed to the governing body and incoming Principal.

The sponsor maintains daily oversight. The interim Principal utilises best practice within the multi-academy Trust to build expertise of both leaders and teachers through the introduction of professional tutors. The executive board has used its links with other academy trusts to find a leader for the academy from July, so reducing any period of uncertainty.