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26 June 2015

Mrs Karen Ingham
Acting Headteacher
Glenburn Sports College
Yewdale
Southway
Skelmersdale
Lancashire
WN8 6JB

Dear Mrs Ingham

Special measures monitoring inspection of Glenburn Sports College

Following my visit with Peter McKay, Additional Inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 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 March 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 not appoint newly qualified teachers 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 Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Anne Pontifex

Associate Inspector

Appointed as an Associate Inspector under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule V2 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in order to raise standards, especially in mathematics and science, and ensure that all groups of students make at least good progress in all subjects by teachers:
 - setting work that is appropriate to the different abilities of students in each lesson and ensuring that this results in students behaving well in all lessons
 - always ensuring that students are stretched and made to think deeply, especially the most able
 - raising their expectations of the students and insisting that all students' work is completed and presented well, particularly in mathematics and science
 - ensuring they mark work regularly with specific comments on how to improve it and giving students opportunities to respond to these comments.
- Urgently improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels are actively involved in checking the impact of any strategies to improve students' achievements
 - developing the expertise of subject leaders so all can hold the teachers in their departments effectively to account for the progress their students make
 - always having a clear focus on the progress students make when evaluating the quality of teaching and deciding the pay that teachers receive
 - governors holding the school to account more effectively for all its work.

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.

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

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 June 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, the local authority adviser who is assigned to the school, various senior leaders and a group of students. Students' learning was observed in a range of lessons. A selection of students' exercise books was scrutinised. Aspects of the school's arrangements for safeguarding students were reviewed, along with information relating to students' attendance.

Context

A redundancy process has been implemented with care being taken to enable the majority of option subjects to continue to be offered next academic year.

Since the last monitoring inspection in March 2015 a decision was communicated on the 19 May that the school would be subject to a phased closure and that, as a result, from next September the school will only accommodate students from Years 9 and 11. There are currently 311 students on roll.

Achievement of pupils at the school

In Key Stage 4, current internal information held by the school demonstrates an improvement in terms of both progress and attainment on this time last year.

Examination of the school's data combined with lesson observations indicates that the progress of students is improving across the curriculum. However, predictions for overall achievement at GCSE level are still below where they should be and the gap between the achievement of boys and girls continues to grow.

The whole-school procedures to monitor the quality of teaching combined with an appropriate staff support and challenge programme are having a positive impact. A lot of additional intervention has been provided by the school and taken up with enthusiasm by students outside of the normal school day. The school has also begun to focus on intervention strategies within each classroom to ensure the best outcomes for all individual students.

Lesson observations and work scrutiny highlighted students' poor literacy skills which have become established over the years. These poor skills are a major impediment to students' overall progress. Action is being taken via the Year 7 and 8 reading and writing programme, and an initiative to be introduced in the next academic year is in the early stages of development, to further and rapidly develop students' much needed literacy skills.

An external review of the entry of students into English examinations has been carried out and the school is now confident that students have been entered for the appropriate tier of the examination. Students' work in English has been externally moderated and additional support from the local authority has provided extra revision sessions.

A range of strategies has been put in place to support students in science. However, it is imperative that the leadership and management of this department works to reverse the below average outcomes of students to ensure that good progress is made.

The target-setting process has been further reviewed and individual targets now include a clear focus on progress. Tracking of students' progress is now more accurately informed by regular assessments. However, there is still a need to maintain the momentum developed so far and to continue to focus on narrowing the gaps in both the attainment and progress of students when compared to their peers both in school and nationally. The good practice with regards to tracking of students' progress in Key Stage 4 now needs to be further developed into Key Stage 3 to ensure the best possible outcomes and robustness of procedures for all students.

The pupil premium review which was carried out earlier in the year has been supported by an action plan which has in turn led to the appointment of a governor champion who has worked with staff to provide both support and challenge.

The pupil premium policy has been reviewed and relaunched. The enhanced expectations with regards to data analysis for these students now mean that intervention activities are more centred on meeting the needs of individual students. The school now plans to develop its monitoring approaches using work scrutiny and gaining the views of students to further enhance the performance of students supported by the pupil premium.

A 'pupil passport' is currently in development to be piloted with Year 9 students. This document will aim to record all interventions centrally and will in effect provide an overview of all support provided for students. Data analysis shows that the gap in performance for students who are supported by the pupil premium and other students is reducing. However, work is still required to move in line with national figures.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching continues to improve across most areas of the curriculum.

The majority of teachers have adopted a positive and proactive response to the direction, vision and increased expectations of the acting headteacher and her senior leadership team.

Teachers have benefited from the creative and robust support and challenge brokered for departments via the local authority and Penwortham Girls High School. As a result, lessons are now more engaging, questioning has improved and the students report that lessons are more interactive and fun.

In a GCSE physical education lesson students' progress was rapid and the lesson moved with considerable pace. Students demonstrated their ability to use and understand technical language. A love of the subject was evident from the engagement in tasks and smiles on their faces.

The standard of marking continues to improve. Students report that marking is now much more informative. There is now increased consistency of practice across the school. School leaders have established systems to monitor the quality of marking and they are aware that there is still further work to be done, especially in enabling students to act upon feedback given by teachers by creating quality reflection opportunities.

Displays for learning are now providing purposeful learning resources as well as enhancing the environment and celebrating success. As a result, the school now feels both more welcoming and more business-like.

Teaching assistants have taken a far more proactive approach to providing support and challenge for students. Their positive use of questioning ensured that students were made to think and work out solutions for themselves. Attention has been given to the allocation of teaching assistants ensuring that appropriate support is being provided for all students. This support is monitored and is leading to improved behaviour in the classrooms. The languages department has been invited by Lancashire local authority to contribute to a working party on how successful departments with effective outcomes can deliver programmes to students from a range of abilities. This is an endorsement of the department's good practice which should be celebrated and shared across the school.

Academic rigour was seen in a geography lesson which was planned in a coherent and logical fashion. The students had a sense of awe and wonder when recognising the power of the sea. Due to high teacher expectations by the end of the lesson the students had secure subject knowledge for this topic.

In a mathematics lesson the teacher creatively linked current affairs with regards to the National Lottery changes as a hook to gain the interest of students in the topic of probability.

Less successful learning was characterised by tasks which lacked support and challenge and a lack of consideration of group dynamics. Lessons lacked clarity

regarding instructions and expected outcomes. Work covered in earlier key stages was repeated.

The profile and the importance of setting homework have been raised. However, further work is needed to ensure that value for money is achieved via the online system purchased to promote homework further.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Clear expectations are now in place for all staff and students regarding behaviour for learning in line with whole-school policy. Teachers use the classroom behaviour system in a fair but firm manner. Improved behaviour management systems are supporting improvements in the classroom and in turn outcomes for students.

Attendance has improved compared to last academic year. Exclusion rates have reduced dramatically.

Students reported that bullying is rare and that if an incident occurs it is dealt with promptly. Students are positive about their school. They reported that they felt safe and that school rules are now clearer and easier to understand. Students wear their uniform and sports kit with pride.

An exercise recently carried out by the school to find out the views of Year 8 students demonstrated that the majority of these students now consider behaviour to be good. During the inspection students were courteous, friendly and proud of their school. Students' attitudes to learning were positive. However, some low-level disruption was still seen.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leadership across all levels is on a journey of improvement. All staff are now more accountable. Leaders now have clarity with regards to roles and responsibilities. The acting headteacher has been courageous; she has made difficult decisions and has ensured that the provision for students in her care has improved and continues to improve.

The brokering of training and consultancy work has strengthened middle leaders' self-confidence and ability to lead and manage teams. However, there still remain pockets within curriculum areas which require additional work.

Attendance of both the support and teaching staff has improved compared to the previous academic year. This has ensured that students have a consistent face to face relationship with adults in the school.

The governing body has been significantly strengthened. A skills audit has been carried out and it reflects that the group does not have any major gaps. Meetings are now more systematic and directly linked to the school's action plan. A review of the provision for disabled students and those students with special educational needs has been commissioned. The pupil premium link governor has carried out online training in order to enhance knowledge and skills. The school website has been audited and improved. The governors have adopted a hands-on approach and have worked hard to provide significant support to the acting headteacher. Plans are in place to reduce the accommodation being used next academic year. The governors responded positively to support provided by the local authority.

The additional challenge of the consultation on school closure has been well managed by the acting headteacher and governing body who have ensured that this process has had minimal impact on learning and progress and that the school has maintained a positive focus on ensuring improving outcomes for all students at Glenburn. Leadership responsibilities are currently being reviewed to ensure quality of provision as the school reduces to two year groups. The acting headteacher, governing body and local authority are exploring creative options to ensure appropriate provision. One such example is the brokering of specialist religious education support from Penwortham Girls' High School. Maintaining staffing for the next academic year will be a challenge, however, the school is exploring all options.

External support

The school has received considerable high-quality support and challenge from the local authority and Penwortham Girls' High School. The local authority has provided expertise and knowledge with regards to personnel and financial matters. The school has also benefited from the support and challenge provided via authority reviews and a variety of meetings which have explored progress.