

9 July 2015

Mr Colin Short
Headteacher
Reddish Vale High School
Reddish Vale Road
Stockport
Cheshire
SK5 7HD

Dear Mr Short

Special measures monitoring inspection of Reddish Vale High School

Following my visit with John Leigh, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 7 and 8 July 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 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 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, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Corporate Director, Services to People for Stockport.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching to ensure that all students, particularly those eligible for support from the pupil premium funding, those who have special educational needs and the most able students, achieve well, especially in English and mathematics and particularly in Key Stage 4, by:
 - using information that relates to students' progress to plan activities that match the need of all learners
 - providing appropriate support as well as much more challenge so that all students make the progress of which they are capable
 - raising the expectations of teachers as to the quality and quantity of work that should be produced by students
 - consistently providing clear guidance on how students can improve their work and making certain that students respond appropriately to that guidance
 - providing more opportunities for students to think for themselves, deepen their understanding and become more enthusiastic about learning.

- Urgently improve the safety of students, by:
 - ensuring there are robust and accurate systems for tracking attendance, both at the start of the day and within lessons
 - increasing students' attendance and reducing persistent absence, particularly for those who attend alternative provision, those students supported by the pupil premium and those with special educational needs
 - ensuring safeguarding arrangements for those students whose circumstances make them vulnerable to bullying and discrimination, for example, and/or attending off-site provision are secure, including ensuring that students have sufficient regard for their safety when they leave the site at the end of the school day
 - making certain that all groups of students, including those whose circumstances makes them vulnerable to bullying, and their parents, are confident that bullying is dealt with robustly.

- Improve the behaviour of students in lessons and around the school and reduce exclusions by:
 - encouraging students to have a positive attitude to their learning, including being punctual to the start of lessons
 - ensuring that staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy, both inside and outside the classroom.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - using information that the school has on students' progress and outcomes more accurately in order to check and understand exactly how well the school is doing
 - ensuring the procedures for checking the quality of teaching are robust and that everyone has a clear understanding of what good and outstanding learning looks like
 - making certain that the performance management system is having sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and that pay progression for staff is robustly linked to the outcomes for all students
 - making senior leaders more accountable for the outcomes of students
 - ensuring governors understand data so that they can accurately check the progress of all key groups for themselves
 - improving the way that governors and senior leaders check and understand the financial situation of the school.

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.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 7 to 8 July 2015.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, groups of students, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The inspection team paid particular attention to the leadership and management of teaching and learning and the provision and outcomes for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Inspectors observed learning in lessons across Years 7 to 10; six of these observations were conducted jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the academy's current data on achievement, attendance and exclusions, minutes of the governing body meetings, an external review of the leadership of teaching and learning, and an external review of the provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Inspectors also took account of the 75 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, four permanent and one temporary teacher have left the academy. Seven teachers have been appointed to join the academy in September including a new director of science and new heads of physics and geography. The academy has recently appointed two new members to the governing body.

A due diligence exercise on behalf of a potential academy sponsor has taken place with a view to Reddish Vale High School becoming a sponsored academy in the near future.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The progress that Year 11 students made in 2014 was below national averages in English and mathematics. In response to improvements to teaching and interventions, such as booster classes, academy data indicate that current Year 11 students are making progress that is above the national average in English. However, progress levels for the current Year 11 remain below the national average in mathematics. The academy has strong supporting evidence to show that current Year 10 students are making good levels of progress in both English and mathematics. As in previous years, the academy expects high levels of attainment in the sciences, computing, modern foreign languages and the performing arts.

Academy data indicate that the gap between disadvantaged students and their peers is beginning to narrow, particularly in English and for those students with high levels of attainment when they joined the academy in Year 7. Despite these improvements the academy does not predict any considerable narrowing of the gap between disadvantaged students and their peers in the attainment of five GCSEs at grades A* to C in 2015.

Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are making good levels of progress in English but, for the most part, failing to meet their targets in mathematics. In response to this the academy is introducing a range of initiatives, such as professional development in mathematics for learning behaviour mentors and other learning support staff and the inclusion of mathematics activities at the Year 6 summer school.

The quality of teaching

During this monitoring inspection, students made good or better progress in approximately sixty per cent of the learning observed in lessons. This indicates a gradual and continued improvement to the quality of teaching. Teachers are increasingly challenging students through the effective use of questioning. As a result, students are better able to articulate their developing knowledge and understanding and demonstrate improved communication skills. Teachers now regularly monitor the progress made by individuals and many are using this effectively to adapt their teaching appropriately, including to meet the needs of the most able and those with special educational needs. Students value the improved marking of their work and most respond positively to their teachers' comments.

Where learning is strongest in the academy, the teachers have very high expectations of their students, regardless of their starting points. This was exemplified in a cooking and nutrition lesson for a small group with special educational needs. Students were expected to draw on previous learning to identify issues related to health, hygiene and nutrition; describe why they were important and use this to develop a recipe and create a tasty and healthy meal. They strove to meet their teachers' high expectations, acting with high levels of maturity and pride in their work. Similarly, in a Year 8 drama lesson the teacher encouraged the students to take risks when improvising by modelling risk taking in his teaching style. This was very effective as it gave the students the confidence to 'give it a go'.

The students who met with inspectors were of the view that teaching had improved and lessons were usually more active and interesting than in the past. However, in a minority of lessons teaching failed to inspire learners and sometimes led to low-level disruption. Scrutiny of students' books showed that most take pride in their work but where learning was less strong the work was too often poorly presented and there was evidence of students copying out chunks of text.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance has continued to improve for all groups and is now broadly in line with national averages. However, levels of persistent absenteeism overall and absence rates for students with special educational needs remain higher than national averages. A range of initiatives are in place to reduce persistent absenteeism and this is beginning to have a positive impact. These include a 'moving up' transition project for disadvantaged students and their families with a focus on the importance of good attendance and a smart phone app allowing parents to receive updates on their child's attendance.

The percentage of students excluded from lessons through the 'on call' and internal exclusion system has reduced considerably since the last monitoring inspection. Students are now expected to continue with their subject studies while in internal isolation and are not permitted social time with friends. These increased sanctions have resulted in fewer persistent offenders.

The majority of parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire are of the view that the academy ensures that students are well behaved and that it deals effectively with bullying. However, approximately 15% disagreed with these statements. The students who met with inspectors spoke highly of the work of the anti-bullying ambassadors and value the reward trips for good attendance.

Systems for safeguarding students remain robust with safeguarding as a standard agenda item for all leadership meetings. Inspectors saw evidence of the academy working very closely with a range of agencies to support students at risk. Although the academy aims to safeguard students by including, for example, assemblies on child sexual exploitation and extremism, there is currently too little personal, social, health and economic education that supports students' understanding of healthy relationships and how to protect themselves and others from sexually transmitted infection or unwanted pregnancy.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders and governors have responded swiftly and effectively to concerns raised at the previous monitoring inspection by commissioning a review of the leadership of teaching and learning. The academy has responded to the recommendations by, among other things, strengthening the leadership of teaching and learning at senior level and offering training to middle leaders in providing effective feedback and managing difficult conversations. Feedback given by senior leaders during the inspection was more appropriately focussed on the progress made by individuals and groups than was the case previously. Teachers more readily demonstrated the ability to reflect critically on their practice. The review recommended that the academy pursue the underperformance of supply staff as effectively as that of permanent staff. This is now beginning to be addressed, particularly for those on longstanding contracts.

Achievement and attendance data presented to governors are, for the most part, comprehensive but would benefit from being benchmarked against national data to enable governors to interrogate them more thoroughly and ask challenging questions. The achievement data were also not analysed for gender despite there being a notable difference in the progress made by girls and boys in English in 2014.

The students who met with inspectors are supportive of the changes the headteacher has brought to the academy since it was placed in special measures. They were particularly keen to discuss the improvements to behaviour which they attributed to the good range of lunchtime and after-school activities and increased teachers' presence at lunch and break times. Students were also supportive of the greater emphasis on celebrating the achievements of younger students through the introduction of the 'Juniors' and the awards evening for Key Stage 3 students. Most of the parents and carers who responded to Parent View agreed that the academy was well led and managed.

Governors continue to support and challenge the academy effectively and will benefit from the increased capacity the two new members will bring to the governing body.

External support

Since the last monitoring inspection, the local authority has reviewed the leadership of teaching and learning. The impact of the review is beginning to show in the improvements to lesson feedback and to the quality of teaching.