

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



16 December 2015

Mr Paul Lyons
Interim Headteacher
Oakfield Lodge School
Warmingham Road
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 4PP

Dear Mr Lyons

Special measures monitoring inspection of Oakfield Lodge School

Following my visit with Linda Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 December 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next 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 Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Director of Children's Services for Cheshire East.

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2015

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - eradicating all inadequate teaching
 - making sure teachers plan lessons that motivate students because the content is inherently interesting and they see a relevance in what they are learning and so their attitudes to learning are consistently good
 - teachers setting work that is at the right level for students of different abilities so that it is neither too easy nor too difficult
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are always deployed where they can make the most difference to students' learning.

- Improve students' rates of progress, especially in English and consequently their attainment by:
 - improving the teaching of basic reading, writing and mathematical skills and ensuring that work in other subjects gives students plenty of opportunities to use and apply these skills
 - getting students to work hard and think things out for themselves
 - insisting that students always present their work to a good standard.

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including the management committee, so that improvement is driven forward at a rapid rate by:
 - reducing the level of supply staff as quickly as possible and making swift decisions about the appointment of permanent senior leaders
 - rapidly introducing a rigorous system for managing the performance of teachers
 - ensuring that all students on part-time tuition programmes have a full-time education and so that attendance improves further
 - analysing data on students' progress and attainment so that leaders know how well different groups of students are doing and making sure improvement plans are based on these findings
 - making sure students are prepared well for reintegration into mainstream schools so that they very rarely have to return to the unit
 - ensuring that the management committee has a full and accurate view of students' achievements, including the use and impact of pupil premium funding, how teachers' performance is managed and how this relates to the pay they receive
 - undertaking an external review of the management committee, to include a specific focus on the impact of pupil premium funding, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance can be improved.

- The management committee should:

- make representation to the local authority in order to secure a suitable and permanent building venue for the unit
- ensure that the plans to address the budget deficit are realised.

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

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 December 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, groups of pupils, several teachers and support staff, the Chair of the IEB and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also visited classrooms to observe learning, toured the school site to check its suitability and reviewed the school's single central record.

Context

The interim headteacher took up the post on 1 September 2015, following the departure of the incumbent interim headteacher in July 2015.

The school relocated to its current location on 30 November 2015, one week prior to this inspection, as part of the local authority's plan to move the school to a permanent site. Proposals to provide a permanent site for the school are at a similar stage to that reported in the previous inspection report of June 2015.

Plans to convert the school to an academy are beginning to take shape. The IEB is considering a small number of possible academy sponsors. The local authority remains supportive of the proposal for conversion to an academy. A provisional date, 1 September 2016, has been set for the conversion.

Outcomes for pupils

The school's own information shows that the inconsistencies in progress, identified at previous monitoring inspections, remain. However, leaders' records, showing each pupil's starting point along with teachers' latest assessment information, show that the rate of pupils' progress is beginning to increase. For example, analysis of the information shows that, in English and mathematics, around 50% of pupils progressed at the rate similar to their peers elsewhere during the first half of the Autumn term. This is an improvement compared to rates of progression achieved in the past.

Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils in school in a wide range of subjects, including art, physical education, information technology, science and design technology. Inspectors' scrutiny of teachers' planning for lessons shows that teachers identify this group of pupils well. Leaders are aware, though, that still more needs to be done to ensure activities in lessons are even more closely matched to the specific needs and interests of all pupils. As with all other pupils, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils making the expected progress is below the national figure but improving.

It is too early to judge accurately the impact that moving the school to a new site has had on pupils' progress. However, leaders are confident that the progress demonstrated in the first half term of the academic year has not been derailed by the move. The school's records show that in the week following the inspection, attendance overall was similar to the previous six weeks and the number of pupils attending for the whole week rose by two. Furthermore, the school's behaviour logs show that in the same week there were fewer incidents of pupils leaving their lessons for prolonged periods of time, compared to the weeks prior to the move. These are strong indications that leaders' confidence is well founded.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Several examples of strong teaching were seen during the inspection, all of which led to good learning. For example, inspectors saw teachers using video clips to hook pupils into the subject, making effective use of higher-level examination questions to challenge more-able pupils and using anecdotes to which pupils could relate in order to maintain their interest throughout the lesson. Where teachers used their assessment of pupils' aptitude and interests well, pupils were engaged and progressed rapidly.

However, there are still too many examples of weaker teaching which does not match tasks closely to pupils' specific needs. On occasions teachers resort to mundane word search or card sorting exercises, use texts which are beyond the pupils' level of comprehension or give overcomplicated explanations of new concepts. On these occasions, pupils lose interest and sometimes become distracted, resulting in slow progress.

Since the last monitoring inspection, leaders have increased the opportunities for pupils to read frequently by introducing a daily 'Drop Everything and Read' session for all pupils. The high priority placed on this action has ensured that it has become part and parcel of pupils' daily routine. Leaders are aware though, that in order to maximise the impact of frequent reading on pupils' progress, they need to consider carefully an effective approach to guiding pupils towards and through increasingly challenging texts.

Although it is too early to judge the impact of the new site on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, the inspectors' view is one of a marked improvement compared to the previous building. While some classrooms are smaller than those in the previous building, others are far more spacious, bright and airy. The site has an adequate and secure outdoor space with several distinct activity areas. This variety gives a greater opportunity for teachers to be even more creative with their teaching compared to the previous site.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved further since the last inspection. The strong link between behaviour and attendance and pupils' progress, reported at the last monitoring inspection, remains. Leaders' records of attendance and their analysis of behaviour logs match closely to the improvements in pupils' rates of progress since the last inspection. Records show that pupils' attendance overall has risen to over 75% so far this year from below 55% last year. This improvement has corresponded with a significant and sustained reduction in serious incidents and fixed-term exclusions. New systems to manage poor behaviour and to promote good behaviour are impacting positively on pupils' academic and personal progress.

The move to a new site has not distracted leaders and other adults from ensuring pupils remain well cared for. The introduction of TAF (Team Around the Form) has ensured that pupils have a regular opportunity to seek support with, along with solutions to, any concerns they have. Pupils benefit from the skills and knowledge of a professional counsellor and are also supported by a small number of staff trained in counselling. Leaders, other adults and some pupils spoken to, said that the school is much calmer now compared to before the last monitoring inspection. Inspectors' observations confirmed this is the case and is due to the high priority placed on pupils' mental well-being by the school.

Pupils are safe at the school. Pupils spoken to said they feel safe because the new site is safe. A secure fence around the school along with locked and monitored gates ensures that visitors are marshalled safely into the appropriate area of the school. Pupils have their own separate male and female toilets. This is an improvement compared to the sharing of toilets with members of the public in the previous building. However, leaders are aware still more work needs to be done in order to make the school as safe as is reasonably possible. For example, the school's records show that one pupil has climbed on to a flat roof since the school opened. Consequently, leaders are producing written guidance for staff on how to eliminate the risk associated with pupils gaining access onto flat roofs.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim headteacher, along with other leaders, has taken further action to strengthen the use of information to track pupils' progress. The school's tracking systems, for monitoring pupils' academic progress, behaviour and attendance, now allow leaders to monitor and evaluate the performance of individual pupils and also different groups of pupils. Records of IEB meetings show that board members receive, routinely, detailed and accurate information about progress across the school.

The interim headteacher has a strong vision for the school. This is communicated well to all staff and pupils. Daily morning briefings for teachers and teaching

assistants are used effectively by the headteacher to embed high expectations across the school. For example, the new behaviour management policy has been discussed and reinforced at numerous daily briefings. As a result, the policy has been implemented rigorously, pupils have responded positively to the rewards available for improved behaviour, attendance has risen and academic progress is showing signs of moving closer to an acceptable level.

Records show that leaders have visited lessons frequently this term to observe learning. This good practice ensures leaders' high expectations are communicated well to pupils. However, records of leaders' feedback to teachers following observations highlight missed opportunities to strengthen teaching further by pinpointing precisely how teachers' actions have an impact on pupils' learning.

The interim headteacher has an accurate view of how well the school is doing and what it needs to do to improve. This view has been strengthened by the actions of the IEB. Members' frequent visits, including those by the designated governor with responsibility for safeguarding, for example, to check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' safety, challenge and corroborate leaders' judgements about progress. The interim headteacher is aware, though, that in order to ensure even more rapid progress, he needs to sharpen his plans for improvement by including measures which identify specifically the impact on pupils of any actions taken.

External support

Leaders and the Chair of the IEB cannot speak highly enough of the local authority's efforts to ensure the school's move to its new temporary site took place swiftly and smoothly. The move has been a credit to all involved and can be evidenced by pupils' attendance, which did not drop during the process.

Priorities for further improvement

- Sharpen all improvement plans further by pinpointing precisely how teachers' actions impact on pupils' learning.
- Evaluate the impact of the risk assessment that is carried out in respect of pupils' access to the flat roofs of the school buildings.
- Ensure all staff are trained adequately to use the guidance for all staff on how they should manage an incident in which a pupil gains access to a flat roof.