

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

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Ced de la Croix
Sheredes School
Cock Lane
Hoddesdon
EN11 8JY

Dear Mr de la Croix

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Sheredes School

Following my visit to your school on 2 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in October 2014. 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 actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Asyia Kazmi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning across the school by:
 - rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching over time using a combination of lesson observations and work scrutiny to check that students are making good progress
 - using subject specific feedback to students about their work so they know how to make further progress.

- Improve the behaviour of students by:
 - using the school's consequences and rewards system to further develop students' positive attitudes to learning.

- Raise standards of achievement of students eligible for pupil premium funding by:
 - making sure that all teachers provide work which is appropriate to the needs of pupil premium students in their classes, particularly in mathematics
 - ensuring that the progress of these students is closely monitored and that the recording of achievement in different subjects is accurate
 - providing timely intervention when their learning slows and monitoring the impact of this intervention
 - undertaking an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that governors and school leaders robustly hold subject leaders and teachers to account for the progress of their students
 - monitoring closely the progress of students in modern foreign languages, mathematics and science and responding swiftly if standards are not rising
 - ensuring that school policies with regard to marking, feedback and the promotion of literacy are being applied consistently across the school
 - conducting subject reviews across the school and implementing any recommendations swiftly to ensure standards rise across all areas of the school.

- Improve achievement in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that appropriate advice and guidance is given so that students embark on courses which are right for them
 - providing the necessary supervision and support for students who struggle to meet expectations
 - developing programmes of study that prepare sixth formers fully for life beyond school
 - ensuring that sixth-form teaching is consistently good.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 2 December 2015

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, subject leaders and the head of sixth form, groups of pupils, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. The inspector considered a range of evidence, including: the school and departmental improvement plans and self-reviews; minutes of governing body meetings; pupils' books and the school's data on their outcomes; and external reviews regarding the effectiveness of the school's work.

Context

Two new assistant headteachers joined the school in September 2015 and two will join in January 2016. Since the previous inspection visit, two vacancies in the science department have arisen due to tragic personal circumstances. A new science teacher joined the school in October and a mathematics teacher will join in January.

A National Leader of Education from the Alban Teaching School Alliance supports the school. The school continues to experience a high number of pupils joining at times other than at the start of Year 7.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

- Senior leaders have established regular monitoring and evaluation activities such as learning walks, scrutiny of pupils' books and subject reviews, which are undertaken jointly with subject leaders. While appropriate, the key issue with these systems is that findings are reported in general terms and are not giving senior leaders precise enough information about the knowledge, skills and understanding pupils have or have not acquired in each subject.
- There are regular line management meetings with agendas shared in advance which include reviews of pupils' achievement. While this is good management practice, senior leaders are keenly aware that teachers were not accurate in their assessment of grades pupils were likely to get in several subjects in the 2015 GCSE examinations. Senior leaders, therefore, have established a range of suitable actions to ensure teachers are accurate in their assessments.
- Senior leaders, with external support, have now established good systems to moderate teachers' assessments, in examinations as well as in coursework. Work is also underway to check that the new schemes of work, including in English, mathematics and science, are suitably challenging. Senior leaders have established regular analysis of

assessments, such as mock examinations, in Key Stage 4 subjects. This gives subject leaders with a more detailed understanding of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' outcomes, which are then addressed through teaching and intervention activities.

- Governors are well informed about the work of the school; they are challenging and inquisitive about key aspects of the school. They follow this up through first-hand evidence gathering such as from visits to departments they are linked with or attending exam analysis meetings. Nevertheless, governors have not sufficiently challenged the school's evaluation of teaching, which is very positive when compared with the less positive outcomes pupils attain.
- The actions taken to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are proving successful. Governors set up a pupil premium strategy group to ensure that additional funds for disadvantaged pupils make a difference. This group is aware of the actions taken and rightly ensures that activities that did not make much difference are changed or stopped. Sixth form pupils have been used successfully to mentor disadvantaged pupils.
- Subject leaders are relatively inexperienced; but they are committed, enthusiastic and understand what is expected of them. Most subject leaders are able to articulate the key weaknesses in pupils' learning in their subject area. However, they do not emphasise these in their reviews well enough, including how these link to the improvement needed in teaching. Subject leaders value the support of senior leaders as well as that of the external advisers.
- A wide range of action has been taken to improve teaching. This includes lead teachers coaching colleagues, whole-staff training sessions and external support for individual teachers as well as departments. Senior leaders undertake observations to review the impact of this work, which is seen particularly in the increased focus teachers have on literacy.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The progress that pupils are making is improving, particularly in English, mathematics and languages. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have improved substantially and the gap with their peers is much smaller, but this is also because their peers are not achieving as well as they can. The attainment of pupils, although increasing, remains below national rates. Much remains to be done to ensure all pupils make greater rates of progress in order to achieve higher standards, including in English and mathematics.
- The school is generally a calm, orderly place. The majority of pupils focus on learning, applying themselves to their work and engaging with their

peers productively. Some very good examples of literacy- and science-specific peer assessment are undertaken by pupils, as well as good follow-up on improving their work in English. Attendance is improving and exclusions are reducing though they remain too high.

- Good work has been done to involve parents in their children's learning: there was high parental attendance at the academic review day as well as at the welcome evening held for each academic year.
- A whole-school literacy focus is more clearly evident in teaching as well as in the marking of pupils' work. Although not enough pupils are reading challenging texts, the drop everything and read (DEAR) sessions are taken seriously by pupils and teachers alike. There is good practice of teachers using key vocabulary, and some excellent practice in setting sentence starters, for example, in science to ensure pupils articulate their reasoning well. There are also some good examples of pupils improving their written work as a result of teachers' feedback. Pupils' books also show more challenging written tasks set in subjects such as geography.
- The sixth form leader has established a sensible cycle of meetings with subject leaders and teachers to check learners are on target to achieve the results expected of them. Good links have been established with other schools teaching the same courses to support less-experienced teachers. Sixth form learners are very positive about the guidance they receive, particularly in English.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The proportion of pupil who attained at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics increased by two percentage points from last year. However, this remains well below the national rate and was below the proportion predicted by the school.
- Pupils' progress has not improved consistently across the school because teachers' assessment of learning is not accurate in several subjects. Progress is particularly poor in science. The head of science has put in place the right measures to address staffing issues, including new schemes of work and a much stronger focus on literacy across the school. In mathematics, there is not enough emphasis on developing pupils' mental skills and on ensuring high-quality written work in mathematics books.
- Although the development of literacy is much more prominent now, too often teachers are focusing on word level – correcting spelling, rather than improving pupils' sentences and paragraphs. Not enough is expected of pupils in explaining their reasoning more formally in written work in different subjects.

- While pupils are emphatic in noting the improvements in behaviour, there remain some pupils who do not adhere to the higher expectations teachers have of them. While reducing, exclusions remain too high.
- Most teachers are not familiar with the more challenging demands of the primary curriculum and therefore do not build on these sufficiently well as pupils join the school.
- Too many learners were not on A level courses that were matched well to their abilities. The school has taken now taken a more robust approach to checking learners are able to meet the demands of a rigorous academic course.

External support

The quality and impact of the external support provided for the school has helped to establish systems and processes in the school, for example, departmental reviews, subject moderations and line management structures. These activities have been inconsistent in the impact they have had on pupils' outcomes across different subjects.

The local authority chairs monthly action group meetings: minutes show this is an update on the actions taken and, to a lesser extent, the evaluation of these. The evaluation lacks precision as to the difference advisers are making and what more needs to be done.

Further support is provided by the Alban Teaching School Alliance, who have undertaken moderation of teachers' assessment in different subjects, coached teachers and provided training for middle leaders, who value this highly. However, feedback from these sessions is not specific to the subject. It does not focus enough on the knowledge, skills and understanding pupils do and do not have.