

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

Direct T 03000 131 543

Direct email: Philippa.Darley@ofsted.gov.uk



21 October 2015

Mr Richard Hedge
Interim Headteacher
King's Grove High School
Buchan Grove
Crewe
Cheshire
CW2 7NQ

Dear Mr Hedge

Special measures monitoring inspection of King's Grove High School

Following my visit with Judith Straw, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 29 and 30 September 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 became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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 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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Cheshire East.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Darley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Significantly improve the effectiveness of the senior leadership and governance in improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of students, so that they are at least good, by:
 - ensuring that all leaders develop a precise view of the school's work and are tightly focused on bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching, students' achievement and behaviour in classrooms
 - using the pupil premium funding effectively to improve the achievement of those students it is intended to support
 - robustly supporting the work of subject leaders in overcoming the impact of weak teaching over time on students' achievement.
- Urgently improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good and supports all students to make good or better progress, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
 - raising the level of expectation that teachers have of all students, including those with disabilities and special educational needs, so that teachers provide challenging and engaging activities in lessons and in all students' homework
 - making certain that the work of teaching assistants is well directed, including when they are supporting students with disabilities and special educational needs
 - marking students' books consistently and in appropriate detail, so that students receive the guidance they need to improve the standard of their work, and ensuring that they respond appropriately to the marking
 - teachers insisting of students that their skills in writing are of the highest quality
 - ensuring that the systems for dealing with low-level disruption are always applied effectively
 - making sure that opportunities to develop students' spiritual, moral and social education are not missed.
- Significantly improve standards in English and mathematics for all students, but particularly for the disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs, so that they are at least in line with the standards expected nationally, by:
 - supporting weaker readers through the effective use of the Year 7 catch-up reading programme
 - ensuring that all staff support the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, including comprehension, grammar and spelling, across the curriculum and in all year groups
 - supporting and further developing the personal reading habits of older students.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.
- 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 management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 29–30 September 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher and members of the leadership team from the school and also from the Macclesfield Academy, which continues to support the school. Inspectors met with two members of the interim executive board (IEB) which has replaced the governing body. They met with three subject leaders and a group of teaching assistants to discuss how their roles and responsibilities have been developed since the last inspection. Inspectors met with three groups of students and spoke to other students in classes and during the school day. Inspectors observed parts of 12 lessons, many of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. They also scrutinised students' work from across a range of subjects, to evaluate the progress they have made, and the quality of teachers' assessment. The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. Inspectors considered the 40 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in March 2014, the foundation trust status of the school has been formally disbanded. Leaders have requested an academy order from the Secretary of State and are about to enter the formal period of consultation, in order to convert to academy status. The IEB have invited South Cheshire College to act as sponsor and joint meetings have been held with parents to inform them about planned changes. The IEB has recently advertised for a substantive headteacher to be appointed from January 2016. The current arrangement of support from the senior leadership team at the Macclesfield Academy comes to a close at the end of this calendar year.

Outcomes for pupils

Standards remain low. In the 2015 GCSE examinations, just 34% of students achieved five GCSE passes at a C grade or above, including in English and mathematics. These results remain well below the national average and represent inadequate progress for this year group. The school failed to meet the government floor standard this year (this is the minimum expected standard for schools at the end of Key Stage 4).

These results represent a disappointing dip in standards from the previous year and were not anticipated. This was entirely due to inaccurate teacher assessment in English, which led leaders to believe that more students would attain a C grade in this subject. This lack of accuracy in assessment in English remains a crucial factor undermining the otherwise strong trajectory of improvement in the school.

Progress is improving in subjects such as science, religious education and art and this is starting to have an impact on anticipated GCSE results in these subjects. Progress in mathematics is improving along with the teaching in this subject, but students have many gaps in their learning which will take time to overcome. Progress in English, both at Key Stage 3 and 4 remains unclear. Ascertaining this is now an urgent priority for the school.

Gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs remain wide across the majority of subjects at Key Stage 4. However, the use of Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding is ensuring that many more of these pupils are quickly improving their basic literacy and numeracy skills in Years 7 and 8.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching is improving. Leaders are starting to embed a culture of high expectation in relation to how teachers plan and resource lessons. In some departments, for example in mathematics, teachers now carefully share with students what they want them to understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson. This enables teachers to identify quickly where students have gaps in their mathematical understanding. Teachers focus on building students' confidence and skills in this subject, often having to unpick misconceptions before they can go forward with new learning. However, through their good subject knowledge and competent management of lesson time, teachers are enabling students to make steady progress.

Work in books, as seen by inspectors, is regularly marked, and students are given helpful guidance by their teachers. This reflects the school's new assessment policy. In many cases, students have time to respond to this guidance during the 'improvement phase' of class time. Some teachers use these opportunities very effectively, for example to ensure students are able to correct errors in their work or to guide them to develop their thinking in more depth. Other teachers make more cursory comments that have little impact on the progress students make. Similarly, the school spelling policy is applied with varying success, so is having little impact on improving students' writing skills more widely.

The work of teaching assistants is better directed and those who spoke to inspectors demonstrated a developing confidence in their roles and the impact they have on improving learning. Some teaching assistants work entirely within the English, mathematics and science departments. They are managed by these subject leaders and work closely with teachers in order to understand how they can best be deployed in lessons. Inspectors observed them supporting students well, focusing on improving knowledge and skills as opposed to managing behaviour, as was formerly the case.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Student behaviour around school and during break and lunchtimes was not a significant issue at the previous inspection. Behaviour at these times remains orderly and respectful.

Behaviour in lessons has improved markedly since the last inspection. This is confirmed by school records of sanctions for poor behaviour and it is confirmed by teachers and by the majority of students. Inspectors did not observe any low-level disruption in lessons and this was confirmed to be usually the case by students in these classes. However, some students reported that a few of their subjects were regularly disrupted by the same small number of students and that this was having a detrimental impact on their learning. This directly reflects the difficulties a few teachers continue to have with the management of behaviour in their classrooms.

Leaders have introduced a new policy governing how students should present their work. Evidence from books demonstrates that this has had variable impact. Some teachers see the value in having such a policy, as it helps to establish high expectations, and so they expect it to be followed. However, other teachers continue to accept sloppy work that reflects little care or pride on the part of the students concerned. Furthermore, students who spoke to inspectors were unable to associate their presentation skills with their attitudes to learning and accuracy in writing. Consequently, it is having little impact in these areas.

Attendance has been a priority for the school. It has improved and is now running close to the national average for secondary schools. Days lost to exclusions have also fallen significantly as more students respond to the new culture of high expectations and aspirations in the school. While a minority of students continue to experience the sanction of isolation within school, this is increasingly only being used for those who would previously have been excluded.

The attendance and exclusion patterns of those students who are disadvantaged or who are disabled and have special educational needs has also improved along with their peers. Where once they were absent for over 10% of school time, their overall attendance is now up to 94% and continues to improve.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

The leadership team from Macclesfield Academy continues to work alongside senior leaders in the school, effectively developing their competencies to fulfil the responsibilities of their roles.

Leaders have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in the school, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching. They draw upon a wide range of

evidence to support their judgements about individual teachers and they provide an appropriate level of support and challenge to teaching staff. This has built a collegiate understanding of what constitutes good teaching and an acceptance that all staff must step up to the mark. Leaders have tackled inadequate teaching head-on, working successfully with those who can, and want to, improve.

Subject leaders are now being held closely to account for the impact of their work. They have fortnightly line-management meetings and have received training in understanding and analysing progress information and in monitoring teaching practice. The majority of subject leaders have responded to these changes well and are starting to drive improvements on the ground much more effectively. They identify trends in the performance of their subject and use these to target curriculum development and staff training and support.

Leaders now report on the use of additional funding, such as the pupil premium, and track its impact against expected successes. While this funding has not had the impact on older students securing examination success, its impact can be seen in the increased attendance and improved attitudes to learning of disadvantaged students.

The IEB has devoted a lot of its time to the disbanding of the foundation trust and to the process of managing the transition from this status to the expected academy conversion. The IEB has managed this effectively, communicating well with all stakeholders and ensuring that parents remain on board during this difficult time. However, neither the IEB nor senior leaders have tackled the weaknesses in English robustly or quickly enough. As a result of this, leaders were unable to predict the fall in attainment in this year's GCSE examinations, nor are they yet in a position to demonstrate that the progress of current students is improving strongly. In addition, they have not ensured that there is an up-to-date safeguarding and child protection policy in place, which is a statutory requirement.

External support

The local authority acted swiftly to replace the previous governing body with an IEB. This has acted effectively to manage the process of legal transition from a foundation school to the anticipated academy conversion. However, since the installation of the IEB and arranged support from the Macclesfield Academy, the local authority has taken a much more 'hands off' approach to monitoring the progress of the school. Consequently, they were unaware of the continued shortcomings of assessment in English and how this is undermining the school's work to drive and evidence improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders must establish quickly an accurate picture of the progress current students are making in English.

- Ensure that all members of the English department receive adequate ongoing training and support in order to improve teachers' assessment in the long term.
- Urgently ensure that the school's safeguarding and child protection policy reflect statutory guidance and the local context, including the duty for schools to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.