

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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Mr Keith Binks
Headteacher
Sir Thomas Wharton Community College A Cooperative Academy
Tait Avenue
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN12 1HH

Dear Mr Binks

**Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Sir Thomas Wharton
Community College A Cooperative Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 4 May 2016, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in January 2015. 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
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 and the director of children's services for Doncaster.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the achievement of all groups of students and the quality of teaching so both are consistently good or better, by making sure that:
 - there are high expectations of what all students can achieve
 - work set matches the needs and abilities of all groups of students, particularly for those who are disadvantaged, those with disabilities and those with special educational needs
 - students' understanding of what they are learning is checked meticulously through skilful questioning
 - clear subject guidance is given when marking students' work so they know what to do to improve
 - students act on the advice given in marking to improve their progress and develop their attitudes to learning
 - students' behaviour is managed consistently well in the classroom
 - reading, writing and mathematical skills are developed effectively across the academy
 - extra support for students is managed more effectively to ensure that students make good progress.

- Improve the impact of leaders, managers and governors by acting swiftly to ensure that:
 - they rapidly improve the quality of teaching and achievement in underperforming subjects so these subjects are consistently good or better and there is no inadequate teaching in the academy
 - all subject leaders consistently and rigorously check the quality of teaching and students' learning in order to make sure that students are making at least good progress
 - planned actions, including in subject leaders' plans, are checked regularly against clear targets that relate to students' progress, in order to determine how well the actions are contributing to improvements in teaching and learning
 - the additional government funding to support disadvantaged students is used effectively to raise achievement.

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

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 4 May 2016

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, subject leaders for English and mathematics, a group of Year 11 pupils and the chair of the governing body. The inspector made a number of visits to lessons to observe teaching and pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. In addition, the inspector scrutinised the single central record, assessment information, details of checks made by senior leaders on the quality of teaching, attendance data and minutes of governing body meetings.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, five teachers have left the school and there have been three teachers on maternity leave. In total, five temporary teachers have been working in the school. A restructure of the senior leadership team is currently under way. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and will take up post in September 2016. An external consultant continues to provide support, but now at a reduced level.

The governing body has continued to explore its options regarding joining a multi-academy trust, following discussions with the regional schools commissioner. However, no firm decisions have yet been taken.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher is a strong driver of improvement in the school. His enthusiasm and commitment to his values ensures that he has the backing and cooperation of the staff. He has stuck resolutely to his plans for improvement and is successfully raising the expectations of both teachers and pupils. However, senior leaders know there is still much to do if they are to secure significantly better outcomes for pupils in 2016. This includes working to improve the attitudes and commitment of a minority of pupils who continue to lack resilience and the determination to improve themselves.

New curriculum plans are being implemented consistently and many teachers are planning individual lessons in greater detail. Pupils have recognised that their lessons are more carefully structured and the work they are provided with is more tailored to their different levels of ability. Some teachers now assess pupils' grasp of new content more skilfully and move learning on more briskly. The longer lessons, introduced at the start of the year, are being used increasingly productively by teachers to ensure that pupils spend more time consolidating and deepening their understanding. Pupils now routinely respond to teachers' marking and feedback, although some pupils reported that this approach had been followed too rigidly by some teachers. The regular checks made on teaching by senior leaders indicate that the overall quality of teaching in the school has continued to improve, although leaders know there remains a significant minority of teaching that needs to improve

further. Where this is the case, tailored support is in place and teachers' performance is being monitored closely.

Additional support for pupils who have gaps in their knowledge and understanding has been better coordinated this year. Sessions have been timetabled for when it has been easier for pupils to attend. More regular assessment has ensured the work provided in these sessions has matched pupils' particular needs. As a result, far more pupils value these opportunities than in the past. Extra classes in English and mathematics have attracted around 80% of pupils, and lunchtime sessions offered in other subjects have also been well attended.

Leaders have improved provision for those pupils who enter the school with lower levels of attainment and now use additional funding more effectively. They have worked closely with feeder primary schools so that they have better information on pupils when they arrive. More time is now given to supporting their literacy and numeracy. Reading programmes are proving particularly successful. Information on the use and impact of Year 7 catch-up funding is now available for parents on the school's website.

More generally, leaders and governors have become more adept at scrutinising assessment information and have a more detailed understanding of the progress being made by different groups of pupils. Governors have continued to meet regularly to scrutinise in-year assessment information. They know, for example, that the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school has begun to narrow, but the picture is inconsistent across year groups and subjects. Attendance information also shows that disadvantaged pupils remain more likely to be absent than other pupils.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement

- Leaders now check, review and evaluate the impact of their actions more systematically.
- Teachers' performance is being managed tightly and there is a close link between teachers' pay and pupils' progress. This is helping to improve levels of accountability. There are increasingly well-tailored arrangements in place to support those teachers who are at risk of not meeting their objectives.
- External support continues to be utilised effectively. As a result of this support, curriculum planning and the work provided are now better matched to pupils' level of ability. Lessons now introduce pupils to more demanding content that is challenging them to think more deeply. This is providing a firmer foundation for better rates of pupil progress in the future.
- More regular and more accurate assessment is providing leaders with better information on pupils' progress. The school now provides better additional support for pupils who are not making the progress they should. Pupils increasingly value this support and are keen to take up the opportunities provided.
- The school continues to be calm and orderly and most pupils show positive attitudes towards learning.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement

- There is, however, a minority of pupils who do not display sufficiently positive attitudes. Although their behaviour in lessons is compliant, they lack the resilience to keep trying when the work is challenging. For example, some persistently fail to bring the right equipment or do not hand in homework. Leaders have recognised that members of staff need to do more to challenge, inspire and motivate these pupils, so that they develop a more determined and aspirational mind-set.
- Gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school are not closing consistently or rapidly enough. The slower progress of some disadvantaged pupils is exacerbated by their persistently weaker attendance.
- Some continuing turbulence in staffing has meant that leaders have relied on a number of temporary teachers working in the school, some for prolonged periods. Leaders are managing the performance of temporary staff appropriately and point out that recruiting suitably qualified teachers is a challenge locally. Nevertheless, every effort should be made to secure suitable staffing, particularly within core subjects.

External support

Valuable support has continued via the Partners in Learning Teaching School Alliance. At a strategic level, the headteacher of the supporting teaching school has provided helpful scrutiny and guidance for the chair of the governing body through her attendance at monthly review meetings.

More operationally, regular joint working between curriculum leaders in the school and their counterparts in the supporting teaching school has secured more accurate and reliable assessment information and improved the quality of curriculum planning. The support provided by Hilltop Primary School has also made a valuable contribution to the improving provision at key stage 3.