

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 March 2017

Mr C Weston
Headteacher
Yewlands Academy
Creswick Lane
Grenoside
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S35 8NN

Dear Mr Weston

Special measures monitoring inspection of Yewlands Academy

Following my visit with Mary Lanovy Taylor, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 1–2 March 2017, 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 that have been taken since the school’s previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2015.

- Rapidly improve the outcomes for pupils by improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all areas of the academy in order to accelerate pupils' progress and increase standards by:
 - ensuring that teachers improve the behaviour of a few pupils in lessons through consistent and appropriate use of the academy's behaviour management systems so that pupils are allowed to learn at all times and are clear about expectations and routines
 - sharing the good practice that already exists within the academy to effect improvements in all teachers' abilities to raise standards and outcomes
 - ensure that teachers take full account of the current knowledge, skills and understanding of pupils when planning lessons so that all groups are challenged and stretched to do their very best at all times
 - insisting that teachers always provide work that inspires and engages all groups of pupils so that they are always interested and behave well
 - insisting that pupils always present their work to the highest standards
 - raising the expectations of teachers to ensure that they always believe that pupils are capable of more challenging work, particularly for the most able
 - ensuring that the gaps in both standards and the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs are urgently reduced so that they make the same progress as their peers nationally
 - accelerating the progress all groups of pupils make so that they achieve as well as their peers in other schools.
- Improve leadership and management so that they are able to effectively drive standards higher and accelerate the progress pupils make by:
 - creating a fully accurate appraisal of all areas of the academy through evaluation that can be used to develop an effective plan for school improvement with clear targets, timelines, responsibilities and accountability and ensure rapid progress for all pupils.
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels are able to be fully integrated into any plans for school improvement, know their roles well, are confident to be able to suggest ideas and know that they are contributing to the improvements for pupils
 - using the pupil premium funding effectively to reduce the gaps in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils

- ensuring that the interim executive committee fully challenges leaders at all levels and rigorously holds them to account to quickly reverse any declines in pupil outcomes or standards of teaching, learning and assessment
- quickly developing governance so that it is robust and secure
- auditing and monitoring any support given to staff to ensure that it has an impact and improves standards quickly
- further increasing attendance and taking positive action to reduce persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs.

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 academy's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 1–2 March 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, teaching staff and groups of pupils. Meetings were also held with governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with a representative from Wakefield City Academy Trust.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in October 2016, a leader of modern foreign languages (MfL) was appointed and took up her post in January 2017. A new chair of the governing body took up appointment in November 2016. An assistant headteacher remains absent. Ten temporary teachers are covering for teachers' absence through maternity leave or illness in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, music and MfL. Non-qualified teachers are taking three classes.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have made steady progress since the monitoring visit in October 2016. Improvements in pupils' behaviour and developments in the use of assessment information is starting to give some security to leaders' review of the quality and impact of the school's work. However, leaders and governors are fully aware that more needs to be done.

Much monitoring is taking place by senior leaders across several areas of work including teaching, behaviour and attendance. However, the senior leadership team is at the early stages of drawing together the key and sometimes contradictory messages to identify where it needs to take further action to rapidly improve pupils' progress and what those actions should be. The headteacher and senior leaders are listening and starting to respond to ideas and advice from external reviews. Recommendations from the recent reviews of governance, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding have been adopted in the school improvement plan and actions are sharply focused. The management of pupil premium funding and checks on its impact remain weak. A second external review, commissioned by the headteacher to guide this aspect of the school's work took place shortly before this inspection.

Since the inspection in October 2016, complex safeguarding issues that originate in the local community have arisen. Leaders and governors have drawn on previous experience and are taking decisive action to tackle them. As a result, vulnerable pupils are receiving specialist support from a range of external services. Leaders have ensured that useful materials to raise all pupils' awareness of risks and how to stay safe have been developed. However, leaders and governors have not monitored the impact that the school's work is having on pupils, and opportunities for them to fully absorb the important messages, and to discuss and debate relationships and community issues, are limited.

Given the high number of temporary and inexperienced staff in the school, leaders are using stronger teachers strategically in efforts to secure consistency to aspects of teaching. Greater reliability is emerging in teachers applying the school's systems of marking, lesson format and timely gathering of assessment data. Joint work with specialists from the trust has helped middle leaders to develop the skills to check teaching and learning and to scrutinise pupils' books. However, they do not evaluate this information well enough to identify barriers that slow pupils' learning or how some teachers are able to accelerate pupils' progress.

Governors have a clearer sense of their responsibilities as a result of the external review that has taken place, recent training and the detailed updates and reviews they receive from the trust and senior leaders. Governors are starting to undertake their core responsibilities, and they are providing more balance in their support and challenge. Arrangements to appraise the headteacher's performance and that of staff are under way and plans to tackle a deficit budget are in place. Governors are maintaining their questioning and challenging approach noted on the previous monitoring visit. This has led to sharper appraisal targets being set for leaders and staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

In the majority of classes visited, good relationships were evident between pupils and teachers. Increasingly, pupils are focused in lessons, are diligent in answering questions, and many want to do well and like the opportunities to demonstrate what they know in tests. The use of diagnostic assessment is developing in most subjects to establish pupils' prior knowledge and understanding and to check their progress. Where this is working well, teachers are using this information to structure subsequent work for pupils. This is still very new and is a positive start to making work more engaging and challenging especially for the most able pupils and those in the upper sets. The outcomes are also being used well to identify and support groups of pupils who need to catch up and those who are disadvantaged. There is some effective teaching in science which is helping to reignite the interest and engagement of pupils, particularly boys in most year groups. However, pupils' understanding of key scientific concepts is not fully embedded to enable them to extend their understanding to different contexts.

Diagnostic assessment is not applied effectively by some teachers and, as noted in the October inspection, pupils are set work which is too easy for some and too difficult for others, or they are given a choice of tasks but are not guided to those that will stretch and challenge them. For example, Year 7 pupils quickly worked out number patterns in a mathematics task but were not encouraged to move on to do the extension task and it was not explained to them. The school is hampered by a lack of specialists, particularly in English and mathematics, and staff are not sharply identifying barriers in pupils' knowledge and understanding. In these classes, pupils' learning and confidence are fragile. The inconsistency is greatest for pupils currently in key stage 3, and especially boys in the lower sets. Typically these pupils told inspectors, 'Teaching hasn't changed much.' Such practice has not been challenged and changed by subject leaders since the previous monitoring visit. Consequently, pupils' understanding and progress show modest gains rather than rapid improvement.

Pupils in both key stages have more opportunities to respond to questions and are starting to connect basic ideas and facts in humanities, English and science. Pupils are starting to respond more confidently and are quick to grasp the context of phrases and words from activities in modern foreign languages. Pupils continue to struggle to express their thinking, especially in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' demonstrations and modelling of this skill is helping some pupils to develop confidence to expand their answers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Most pupils are interested in learning and want to do well. They fully understand the standards expected of them and expectations of their behaviour and appearance. Many arrive ready to work and dress smartly, responding to higher expectations of uniform. The school is calm and orderly but teachers do not always devise activities to promote good learning to take full advantage of pupils' interest and increasing engagement. The number of pupils arriving late to school remains high. Pupils are slow to move to some sessions, especially tutorial and afternoon sessions where learning moves at a much slower pace and more boisterous behaviour is noted. The behaviour policy is applied with increasing consistency by staff. Although this has led to an increase in warnings and short detentions, more serious behaviour issues are reducing. The number of exclusions has continued to fall although they do not meet the targets for reduction in the school improvement plan.

Attendance is below average and has declined further since the previous inspection, especially in Year 11. Outbreaks of illness account for some of the downturn but truancy to take unauthorised holidays also has a part to play. Persistent absence, especially of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, remains high.

Outcomes for pupils

The progress seen in pupils' work reflects modest improvements from their starting points in key stage 3 and this is reflected in assessment information. In Years 8, 9 and 10, pupils are completing work well and are independently carrying out basic calculations, recalling formulae in mathematics and taking opportunities to apply their skills in science where appropriate.

Pupils who enter with low prior attainment are able to do procedural work and apply formulas, but learning is not deepened or consolidated enough before the topics end and learning moves on to other aspects of these subjects.

School assessments show that gaps in the progress of disadvantaged pupils and of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are diminishing. Their books show some good examples of work where their interest has been stimulated in a range of subjects, but also unfinished worksheets and blank pages. Although they are making gains in additional sessions and support, this slows when work is not adapted as well as it could be on their return to class. Weaker attendance is a barrier to their learning and also to the continuity of learning for some Year 11 pupils.

The school has revised its expectations for Year 11 pupils. The latest assessments against more demanding targets show that attainment is below expectations. Pupils in Year 11 are aware of their targets and know they have to do more to achieve them. They are demonstrating their determination to do so. Around 50 to 60 pupils are attending Saturday morning revision sessions.

Most pupils in all year groups are responding to very clear expectations about the presentation of their work, but this is not consistently so and incomplete work and spelling errors are not routinely checked.

External support

Wakefield City Academy Trust has provided a range of support to improve the school. It continues to provide additional support for teaching and assessment, leadership and management. This support is being targeted on the key areas for improvement and to strengthen middle leadership. This is helping to secure some improvements in teachers' work and especially in assessment. A closer check is being kept on the school's finances and the clearer advice received is enabling governors to get to grips with their responsibilities. Additional time to evaluate provision and report findings in behaviour, attendance and safeguarding has been allocated. The report provides a useful example to school leaders of how to draw together evidence from monitoring activities to identify the next steps for action.