

## PROTECT-INSPECTION

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26 June 2009

Mr D Wilson  
Acting Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Wilson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stretford Grammar School

Following my visit with Ms Mary Liptrot and Mr Peter Cox, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 24 and 25 June 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education and Early Years Services for Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council.

Yours sincerely

Marguerite McCloy

Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Stretford Grammar School



Report from the first monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 June 2009.

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher and senior leadership team, middle leaders, groups of students, and representatives from the governing body and local authority.

## Context

The previous headteacher resigned at the end of February 2009. The school is being led by an acting headteacher and an associate headteacher, in an arrangement supported by the local authority and facilitated by the governing body of Sale Grammar School. The chair of the governing body has also changed.

There are currently two teachers on long-term sickness absence. Five teachers are leaving the school at the end of the term. Seven new members of teaching staff have been appointed from September, two of these on 1 year fixed-term contracts and two on supply contracts. An assistant headteacher will be joining on a 12-month secondment from another high school in the local authority area. An existing member of staff has also been appointed as an acting assistant headteacher.

The quality and effectiveness of the school's sixth form provision was judged to be satisfactory at the previous inspection and was not a focus for this monitoring visit.

## Achievement and standards

As reported in the February 2009 inspection, standards of attainment across the school are consistently well above average overall. However, most students enter the school with significantly above average standards, and for some learners their progress, particularly in Key Stage 4, had been too slow. The proportion of students achieving the highest GCSE grades in some subjects was lower than would be expected based on their previous attainment at Key Stages 2 and 3.

Inspection evidence shows that students are making at least satisfactory progress in their work during lessons. Progress is often good or better at Key Stage 3, where the school is maintaining its high performance in students' attainment in English, mathematics and science.

The school's most recent assessments of Year 11 students' attainment indicate that a small improvement on the 2008 GCSE results is achievable. Recent predictions suggest that 40% of students will attain five or more A\*-A grades. This is a rise of almost 3% and just 5% below the school's challenging target.

In lessons observed during the inspection, girls made similar progress to boys, and there was no discernable difference between the achievement of students from White British or any minority ethnic backgrounds. Where differences were evident in



less successful lessons, it was that higher attaining students, regardless of gender or ethnicity, were not consistently challenged to make the progress of which they are capable.

### Personal development and well-being

Students are well motivated and have very positive attitudes to learning. They experience group and independent learning in lessons when tasks are well focused and matched to their abilities. In lessons such as English and history, inspectors saw good examples of students' awareness of social, moral, spiritual and cultural issues. Good use of other religious and cultural topics helped to strengthen students' engagement and interest.

Attendance is good. Students get on very well together and with their teachers in a harmonious, tension-free and productive environment. Many students are involved in appropriate fundraising activities that are designed to promote the awareness of the school in the local community at festivals and charity events. These activities allow for the development of student responsibilities. They help to provide much needed funding to schools and communities in other countries, some of which are linked very closely to students of the school and their families.

### Quality of provision

During the monitoring inspection 28 lessons were observed and just over half of these were judged good or better. Lessons were relatively weaker in Key Stage 4 as some of the more-able students were not sufficiently challenged by teaching that was mainly satisfactory, apart from two outstanding Year 10 English lessons.

Teachers have benefited from the comprehensive programme of training and development on classroom strategies and techniques. All teachers now use a common format for planning lessons. As a result, most lessons are structured appropriately and include a variety of activities. Learning objectives are regularly shared with students although they are not always returned to at the end of the lesson to reflect on the extent of learning. The behaviour management policy has been re-launched and there is a greater consistency in its application by staff. Year 7 students appreciated that lessons were 'quieter'. They also commented on the increase in activities so that there was 'more fun and work in most classes'. Strengths of better lessons include thoughtful planning building on prior learning, with structured short-term goals and stimulating activities that challenge and engage students' interests. Good questioning extends students' responses, promoting their thinking skills and enabling them to develop their own ideas and opinions. Many students are able to assess their own work and that of their peers through teachers' explanations of the success criteria for particular levels or grades. This works particularly well in the strongest lessons when the teacher is clearly aware of the skills and needs of individual students, prompting them to express ideas and respond articulately. The best teaching stimulates and involves students successfully in decision making processes, developing thinking and communication skills. In less



successful lessons, low expectations and insufficient challenge limits progress, particularly of the higher attaining students. Work is not so well matched to students' abilities and the review of learning is brief or does not take place.

There are inconsistencies in teachers' marking of students' work. Some work is marked infrequently and even where marking is more regular, it is often superficial. Students' presentation of written work is variable, and does not reflect high expectations from teachers. The school is improving its use of data to track students' progress and achievement. Departments and progress leaders are able to identify underachievement by individual students and implement strategies to remedy this. However, some of the data produced is too complex for teachers to use it confidently in planning and adapting their lessons to meet the needs of all students. The school recognises the need to develop teachers' skills in using information on students' progress effectively to inform planning and improve teaching strategies. The school's specialism has yet to show impact on raising standards and improving teaching and learning. However, the planned restructuring of staff responsibilities from September will provide a greater opportunity to raise the profile of the specialism.

The school has planned for its revised curriculum to take effect from September 2009, so it is not yet meeting statutory requirements. This is allowing time to reshape the curriculum and appoint specialist teachers who can deliver information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social, and health education (PSHE). Much has been done to ensure that when the curriculum is introduced it will meet requirements and improve student choices. To that end, the current time constraints imposed on the curriculum by all students studying three separate sciences in Years 10 and 11 will be lifted. The capacity created will go towards increasing teaching time in Years 7 and 8 for ICT and physical education. In Key Stage 3 and in Year 10 there will be provision for PSHE and citizenship. Students will still be able to select the three single science subjects when choosing options to study in years 10 and 11. The revised curriculum is not yet on offer to the students, and remains as it was during the last inspection. In this respect, progress in that aspect of the key issue for improvement could be described as inadequate. However, there is little that the school could have done to put changes into place prior to the autumn term.

There are some strengths within the current curriculum. The school offers early GCSE entry for Year 10 in mathematics and for Year 11 at AS level. A good range of enrichment activities are offered. The school has developed useful links with universities and through subject areas, such as with a local Hindu temple in religious education, and with the Institute of Mechanical Engineers through the science department. Extra-curricular activities are well attended and an Easter revision school was established to provide additional support for those students taking external examinations.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so more of it is good or better – satisfactory
- Ensure that information on students' performance is used consistently and effectively to meet challenging targets – satisfactory
- Provide a curriculum that meets statutory requirements and is better suited to students' needs and interests, especially in Key Stage 4 – satisfactory

## Leadership and management

Senior leaders and governors are developing the capacity to secure school improvement. Currently, they are guided and supported to a large extent by local authority advisers and consultants. This includes the arrangements put in place regarding the secondment of the headteacher and deputy headteacher of a successful local grammar school. They are very well supported by the substantive deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher (Head of Sixth Form), forming an effective senior leadership team.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and recognises where improvement is needed. Significant work has taken place, in conjunction with local authority advisers, to monitor and evaluate the performance of departments within the school, particularly in observing teaching and learning. Most middle leaders have responded well to this and are developing skills which contribute to the overall capacity of leadership to bring about further improvement. A positive team spirit is evident, and staff appreciate the support of senior leaders, and the opportunities provided to develop their own skills.

Information on students' attainment and achievement is gathered, analysed and acted upon, particularly at senior level. Middle leaders are now using this information more effectively when evaluating the performance of their departments.

The recent appointments of five parent governors, and an imminent staff representative appointment, bring the governing body to full strength. Governors are making plans for the recruitment and selection of a substantive headteacher. Governors are developing their knowledge about the school's work so that they can hold leaders and managers to account for its performance, accepting that they had not done this effectively in the past. They now have a better understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors are actively seeking to improve their skills through relevant training, and are committed to helping the school to move forward.

The school is aware that the impact of its specialist science status is underdeveloped at present, and has appropriate plans in place to improve this aspect of its work.

A comprehensive and robust racial equality policy has been drafted that is measurable and covers all areas of the school's work. However, it has yet to be

issued to stakeholders for their consideration and to the governing body for ratification. The school has taken appropriate steps to promote community cohesion by delegating responsibility to a senior leader and providing appropriate training to them and other key individuals. As yet, there is no formal action plan or policy to identify and measure the provision and impact of the school's promotion of community cohesion within the school or beyond. The school is actively promoting its facilities to the immediate community. It is aware of what more needs to be done to extend students' awareness and understanding of other cultures within the region and nationally.

Support from the local authority and other organisations such as the Greater Manchester Challenge and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust is helping the school reach accreditation for its work with students who speak English as an additional language, and its provision for cultural diversity.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness and consistency of governance and leadership and management at all levels – satisfactory
- Systematically monitor and evaluate the impact of both the school's equality policies and action taken to promote community cohesion – satisfactory

#### External support

Some of the support and guidance provided by the local authority had been in place prior to the last inspection due to concerns about aspects of the school's performance and leadership. The local authority was, therefore, well placed to produce a statement of action and put support plans quickly into place. The impact of this has been that staff have felt reassured during the process. Action plans are appropriately resourced and relevant. They include success criteria by which the effectiveness of the local authority's intervention and support can be evaluated.

Local authority representatives attended meetings with parents after the last inspection, to support the school in ensuring that parents are kept informed about the school's improvement plans and actions that have been taken so far. (Also involving school in LPPA)

The school is also engaging with the Greater Manchester Challenge, which is helping to provide additional finances and professional development opportunities for staff.

#### Priorities for further improvement

The school should continue its work on the five priorities identified in the February 2009 inspection.