

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 1231231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566939
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email: glaw@cfbt.com



8 May 2013

Mr John Meagher
Headteacher
Failsworth School
Brierley Avenue
Failsworth
Manchester
M35 9HA

Dear Mr Meagher

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Failsworth School, Oldham

Following my visit to Failsworth School on 7 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of the visit. Thank you for the help you and your colleagues gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school.

This visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and two deputy headteachers, with four members of the governing body, and two representatives of the local authority. I evaluated the school's plans to improve and had a tour of the school.

Context

Since the inspection in February, two teachers have started their maternity leaves, two teaching assistants and a teacher were successful in getting promotion and left the school.

Main findings

Plans to improve the school are well-written and include appropriate actions, challenging targets, and are highly focussed on the areas to improve that were identified at the last inspection. Senior leaders had started many of the initiatives to improve the school at the time of the inspection. The initiatives are now beginning to pay off and have a positive impact on students' achievement.

Students' attainment is predicted to rise this year with a greater proportion, for example, attaining at least a grade C in mathematics at the end of Year 11. There is greater focus across the school on students making three or four levels progress. Teachers have raised students' aspirations and they have raised their expectations of students. Whereas in the past, grade C at GCSE was acceptable, now it is only the minimum expected and teachers lessons cover more complex work in their lessons to prompt students to attain Grade B or higher.

Senior leaders and teachers have made improvements to the marking of students' work. A good feature is that the marking system takes into account differences between each subject whilst at the same time ensures consistency of approach. For example, the teachers all use the same symbols when feeding back and there is an expectation that work is marked regularly. Students have the chance to respond to the teachers' marking that has a greater focus on showing them what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers have benefited from initiatives such as marking buddies in which they share their marking and help each other to improve. Collections of marked work show teachers what the school has agreed is good practice.

Senior leaders have made improvements to teaching, consequently there is an increasing proportion of lessons that show elements of good teaching. This is linked, in part, to professional development and training for teachers and pairing teachers together to help each other improve. There are informal drop-ins, for example, so teachers can share and improve their planning. Senior leaders have introduced teaching and learning reviews based on reviews of a teachers' teaching; evaluation of their students' work; and a review of lesson planning. The reviews ask teachers to reflect on the training they have received and how it will have a positive impact on students' achievement.

Students' attendance is increasing, the number of exclusions is falling and their behaviour is having a more positive impact on their learning.

Senior leaders have changed the school's systems so that they can check more quickly on students' progress and take more rapid action to tackle students who are falling behind or who have absence. Leaders use the information from tests, from lesson observations and from students' work to check on how much progress students are making. Governors contribute to the plans for improvement. They have overseen a significant improvement in the school's finances and have approved changes to the staffing structure which gives middle leaders more responsibility for students' achievement and the quality of teaching. The governors have raised their expectations and have benefited from training, for example, in how to use data to make sure the school is improving. They are linked to subject departments in faculties to get a deeper understanding of improvement being made in the subjects. They also have an increased focus on groups of students to make sure all groups are making good progress.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority and the school achievement partner have provided effective challenge and support. This has resulted in senior and middle leaders having a more accurate view of the quality of teaching and sharper plans for improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Oldham and as below.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority -
- The lead inspector.