

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View

Skelmersdale

WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 618 8524

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566932

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: hcarnall@cfbt.com



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Mr Will Carpenter
Headteacher
High Well School - South Hiendley
High Well Hill Lane
South Hiendley
Barnsley
South Yorkshire
S72 9DF

Dear Mr Carpenter

Special measures monitoring inspection of High Well School - South Hiendley

Following my visit to your school on 24 June 2014, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2013. 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 the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not 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 Governing Body and the Corporate Director, Children and Young People for Wakefield.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2013

- Improve teaching to be consistently good or better in order to raise achievement rapidly across all year groups, by:
 - developing teachers' knowledge and skills so that in all subjects they plan their lessons using methods that engage, challenge and give all students the scope to take charge of their own learning and the motivation to work hard
 - raising teachers' expectations in relation to students' behaviour, their cooperation and positive contribution to lessons
 - increasing the pace of learning and ensuring students are encouraged to read and write often and have good opportunities in mathematics to improve their skills in number, calculation and problem-solving
 - making the assessment of students' starting points and progress consistent in rigour and accuracy across the school
 - ensuring teachers use assessments to plan work for students that is precisely matched to their level of attainment and build systematically on what students already know and can do.

- Improve students' behaviour and attendance, by:
 - ensuring that all staff develop the insights and skills to manage students' behaviour with consistency and to good effect
 - reducing significantly the high level of exclusions prompted by students' unacceptable behaviour
 - redoubling efforts to reduce the high level of absence through the work of the family support adviser and the school's incentives to encourage good attendance.

- Improve leadership and the capacity to improve the school, by:
 - developing and implementing a comprehensive scheme of rigorous checks on the school's work especially in relation to teaching and students' outcomes
 - improving leaders' skills in observing and evaluating the quality of teaching so that they give teachers clear feedback on their areas for improvement
 - strengthening the part played by teachers' performance management and their professional development in improving teaching
 - ensuring the tracking of students' progress is accurate and clear in showing which students make expected progress and which make less or more than this, leading to an accurate judgement on the school's effectiveness in promoting good achievement
 - making more effective use of pupil premium funding
 - reviewing the curriculum and amending it as necessary to ensure it offers good opportunities for literacy and numeracy in all subjects.

- Improve governance by:
 - making sure governors are given comprehensive reports and accurate evaluations of the school's work so that they can challenge leaders effectively and set them clear expectations that will lead to improvement.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 24 June 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work at both sites, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and members of staff. She spoke by telephone to the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority's service director for inclusion.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, two teachers have left the school. Three teachers have been appointed; one has joined the school very recently while the other two are due to take up post in September. The number of students on roll is rising. Six students have joined the school this term and a further six are expected to be admitted before the end of the academic year. A consultation has been completed on the plan to move the school to a different site and area of the city from September 2015. As an interim measure, a separate unit for Year 11 students has recently been opened in a community centre some distance from the school. Current Year 10 students are attending school there. This centre is being managed by a member of staff from one of the pupil referral units. The school-to-school support arrangements between High Well and the pupil referral units are in the process of being formalised.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The system for regularly tracking students' attainment and progress in the core subjects, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT) is now established. The majority of students in Key Stage 3 are making the expected rate of progress, although the picture is more uneven for Year 10 students. Where students are not making the expected gains in learning, poor attendance is a significant barrier to their learning. An assessment scheme has been introduced to help staff identify the gaps in students' learning so that lesson planning can be very tightly targeted.

An intervention programme designed to improve reading and comprehension skills has proved successful for five students. In a period of three months, students have made gains in their reading ages ranging from six months to well over two years. Although proving successful for some students, leaders recognise that this type of intervention and its style of delivery do not suit all students. They are seeking to extend the repertoire of interventions available both to meet students' deficits in learning and their social and emotional needs.

The one-to-one approach to learning, introduced last term for some Year 10 students, has been adopted in full as part of the fresh start at the newly opened off-

site centre. Year 10 students are each following an individual pathway, at their own speed, towards gaining qualifications at entry level in English, mathematics, ICT, the humanities and preparation for working life. Students take some control over what they work on and how intensively. In only a short period, there are signs that this approach is accelerating the progress of some students towards gaining accreditation. They are also directly involved in selecting other activities for part of each day which contributes to their physical, social, moral and cultural development. In addition, some students have started at work-experience placements and on practical vocational courses which are having a positive impact on their motivation.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is more secure than at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, in large part because school leaders have taken appropriate steps to ensure that as much teaching as possible is done by permanent members of staff. The school has some strong practice on which to build as new teachers join the team in September. This includes:

- segmenting lessons so that there is a careful balance of written and oral activities with practical tasks which demonstrate the intended learning
- questioning which deepens students' thinking and demands answers in complete sentences
- opportunities to discuss responses with classmates and encouragement for students to form their own views
- sequenced instructions which enable students to develop their skills and achieve success
- use of trips and visits to motivate students.

However, weaknesses are evident in some lessons, for instance where insufficient scaffolding is provided for students to make the best progress, clear targets for success are lacking and students' prior knowledge is not built on.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school's leaders have taken a number of steps to improve the management of students' behaviour. As well as the new provision for Year 11 students, intended to have a more mature ethos, the school's building has been zoned to separate Key Stage 3 and 4 students during learning time. These measures are new so it is not yet possible to evaluate their impact. Patterns of behaviour incidents are monitored and in response one-to-one tuition is being provided for two students in local authority venues closer to their homes. There are plans to reintegrate these students into school life next term. Although the rate of exclusion is steady overall, the pattern is uneven. Peaks in exclusions are generally linked to the arrival of new students who are unaccustomed to the school's expectations. Numbers of restraints remain low: staff are well aware of the catalysts for incidents requiring this level of management and take suitable steps to diffuse these.

Overall, there has been a small rise in attendance to date this academic year compared with the same period last year. Nonetheless, the overall attendance figure remains low, in part because five students are persistent absentees. A very small number of students on roll have never attended. In contrast, a small number of students had 100 per cent attendance last half term. Attendance is highest for Year 7 students and declines markedly for each successive year group. The parent partnership officer is rigorous in her efforts to locate students and follow up on absences: she liaises with a range of agencies to safeguard students. Where appropriate, prosecutions are pursued.

In liaison with the Connexions Service, the school has ensured that Year 11 students, with one exception, have a college or training place for September. Connexions are working with the student who is currently unplaced.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the previous monitoring inspection, much work has been done to put the school on a stable, long-term footing; plans are going ahead for a change of location next year. More immediately, the centre for Year 11 has just opened and work is underway to ensure that this is suitably resourced. With financial support from the local authority, the school's deficit has been written off and the headteacher has been able to set a balanced budget. This is a significant step in enabling plans to be made for the long-term future of the school.

Work to develop an integrated curriculum at Key Stage 3 which focuses on improving students' basic skills within a relevant, themed context has continued in preparation for September. Some key decisions remain to be made and leaders recognise that more work is needed to develop the therapeutic element of the curriculum. However, the initial one day per week trial has been extended to two days this term and is showing some signs of success. During this inspection, Wimbledon provided the topical context for work as diverse as designing a computer game based on tennis and working out coordinates for locations on a map of the All-England Tennis Club. In recruiting teachers for the next academic year, this new approach to the curriculum has been given due weight.

The work of the governing body is increasingly aligned with key points in the school's calendar so that governors are dealing with the most up-to-date information. Improved budget management means that governors have a clearer view of the school's financial situation and so can contribute more effectively to strategic decisions. There are promising plans to link individual governors to priorities in the school development plan so that these can be monitored in detail. With support from the local authority, the governing body is beginning to develop a memorandum of understanding for the school-to-school support and joint working with the pupil referral units.

External support

The local authority is providing a good level of support to facilitate the strategic changes needed to secure the school's future. This includes ensuring that the public consultation on the change of location was timely, as well as helping in the search for an appropriate setting for the Year 11 centre. Agreement on the management of the budget has given the school a more secure basis for planning. The local authority is also assisting the development of school-to-school support from the pupil referral units; this includes advice for the governing body in coming to a formal understanding with the pupil referral units' management committee. Direct support from the pupil referral units not only involves some shared staffing arrangements, referred to above, but also includes support for business management. The local authority's support for curriculum development is providing a valuable driver for this important change.