

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231
Maple View Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 01695 566 937
Skelmersdale enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 01695 729 320
WN8 9TG www.ofsted.gov.uk **Direct email:** jsimmons@cfbt.com

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Mr Simon Brennand
Headteacher
Montgomery High School – An Academy, Language College and Full Service School
All Hallows Road
Blackpool
Lancashire
FY2 0AZ

Dear Mr Brennand

Special measures monitoring inspection of Montgomery High School - A Language College and Full Service School

Following my visit to your school on 9 September 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders and middle leaders. The statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, nine teaching staff have left and nine new appointments have been made. The governing body has been dissolved and a shadow governing body is in place. A consultation period is underway as the school intends to join the Fylde Coast Academies Trust.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

All senior and middle leaders spoken with during the inspection fully accept that standards in the school are unacceptably low; they are united in their resolution to raise achievement quickly. Some feel that standards have slipped due to an element of complacency and all agree that the quality of teaching is just not good enough.

According to the school's records, there are currently 26 teachers in the school whose day-to-day quality of teaching is not good enough. Senior leaders realise the urgency with which weak teaching needs to be tackled and are now relating performance management directly to outcomes rather than just lesson observations. They all acknowledge that performance management has not been rigorous enough in the past.

A root and branch analysis of why GCSE results dropped so dramatically this summer is underway. The fall was not predicted by senior leaders and confirms that their assessment data are inaccurate. Middle leaders have begun to seek support for their departments from high performing schools in order to moderate their work and move towards gaining an accurate picture of standards. For example, in mathematics, they have introduced external moderation and simple end-of-unit tests in order to standardise progress, particularly at Key Stage 3.

Senior leaders are yet to address the poor outcomes, attendance and high exclusions for students with special educational needs. This area needs to take much more prominence in the school improvement plan and the statement of action. There is currently no specific monitoring of the day-to-day quality of teaching for this group and too much store is given to teachers submitting unreliable data about these students' progress.

Some weaknesses in middle leadership are being addressed through support and performance management. However, the same scrutiny has not been applied to the performance of the senior leadership team.

A review of governance has taken place. The governing body has been dissolved and a shadow governing body is in place. Governors who wish to be part of the new 'academy council' are currently being interviewed and will be selected to ensure that the new body has all the necessary skills and expertise to hold senior leaders rigorously accountable for standards.

The governors' statement of action does not adequately address all the areas for improvement from the section 5 inspection report. Expectations are sometimes

unclear because the language used is unnecessarily complex. While challenging targets are set for achievement, the statement of action does not always specify the evidence of improvements governors need to see. For example, there are no specific targets for the achievement of students who are disabled or have special educational needs. Furthermore, while senior and middle leaders work to establish accuracy of assessment, governors need to consider other evidence of rising standards, such as work scrutiny, lesson observations and what students and parents say.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The proprietor's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint NQTs.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Blackpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon

Her Majesty's Inspector