

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



16 December 2015

Ms Jane Bailey
Principal
South Shore Academy
St Anne's Road
Blackpool
Lancashire
FY4 2AR

Dear Ms Bailey

Special measures monitoring inspection of South Shore Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 1 and 2 December 2015, 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 academy's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2015.

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.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, 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

Philippa Darley

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 6–7 May 2015

- Ensure that all students' behaviour is at least good and that they are safe by:
 - improving their attendance and punctuality to school and eradicating truancy from lessons
 - making certain that procedures for checking the implementation of safeguarding policies and strategies are robust
 - encouraging students to have more respect for themselves and each other through a tailored programme of personal, social and health education that includes more information on how to stay safe online and challenges bullying and discrimination such as homophobia and racism.

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good, and therefore significantly improve progress and raise attainment in all subjects and year groups by:
 - ensuring teachers' assessments of students' progress and attainment are consistently accurate
 - increasing the level of challenge in lessons for students at all ability levels so that they make much faster progress
 - ensuring all teachers consistently let students know how well they have done and how to improve
 - making certain that all teachers have high expectations of the presentation of work and the care that students should take over their books, as well as in the tasks they undertake
 - ensuring no student is disadvantaged by preparing tasks to support all students, so that even those who have been absent are able to fully participate in learning
 - eradicating low level disruption by improving the rigour of application of the academy's behaviour policy in lessons and around the school.

- Rapidly improve the impact of leadership at all levels, including that of the trust and governors, so that the pace of improvement accelerates quickly by ensuring that:
 - all staff are held to account for the progress of the students in their lessons
 - systems for managing information on students' progress are refined so that leaders have accurate and useful information, which enable their efforts and support to be targeted to the students most at risk of underachieving
 - the pupil premium is spent effectively, and that its impact on students' progress is measured.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the governance of the academy should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 1–2 December 2015

Evidence

The inspector observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and members of the Governing Body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspector also met with several members of the academy's senior leadership team, to discuss the impact of the actions taken to improve attendance, behaviour, the quality of teaching and learning and achievement. The inspector observed teaching in parts of nine lessons, all jointly with a member of the leadership team. She also scrutinised samples of pupils' work and spoke to a group of pupils about their experience of learning and behaviour at the academy. The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation relating to aspects of the academy's performance, including safeguarding information. The inspector met with a representative of the Trust body that sponsors the academy.

Context

There has been a complete restructuring of the senior leadership team since the section 5 inspection in May. The Principal has now been joined by two new vice-principals, one of whom started after October. They are supported by a wider team of assistant vice-principals and associates. A number of teaching staff left the academy in July, and others have been appointed. The academy is actively working with The Blackpool Challenge, a partnership of schools working together to drive up standards in the town.

Outcomes for pupils

The achievement of Year 11 pupils in the GCSE examinations in 2015 was disappointing. The academy failed to meet the national floor standard (this is the minimum expectation for pupils' achievement by the end of Key Stage 4). Progress and attainment in mathematics and science was particularly poor. In the case of science, this was owing to poor decisions made previously about the courses pupils should follow, combined with poor-quality teaching. Standards for the current Year 11 cohort of pupils are not set to substantially increase. Pupils have significant gaps in their learning across a wide range of subjects, due to poor teaching over time.

Pupils in Year 10 and 9 are now following more appropriate curriculum pathways. They are all studying at least two science qualifications. Many more have opted to take academic qualifications in modern foreign languages (MFL) and humanities. This represents a significant improvement that has the potential to raise achievement over the long term. Standards in Year 9 have already improved on last year, as teachers' expectations have increased in line with GCSE requirements. The work in pupils' books shows they are making steady progress across a wide range of subjects. This positive picture is not as apparent in the younger year groups. Low-

and mid-ability pupils do not develop their literacy skills well enough and make common grammatical and spelling errors that are ignored by many teachers. Consequently, pupils do not improve their writing skills over time.

The quality of teaching in science remains poor overall. While staffing in science is now much more stable, teachers' expectations are not yet high enough. Therefore pupils continue to fail to make sufficient gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills in this subject.

Teaching, learning and assessment

There has been a significant turnover of teaching staff since the last inspection. However, leaders have worked carefully with teachers and have accurately identified their strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers' expectations as to the presentation and quality of pupils' work have increased. There is no evidence now of pupils writing graffiti on their work. This represents a positive step change, as it shows pupils largely value their education and want to do well. Work is well presented by the vast majority of pupils.

Teachers consistently follow the academy assessment policy, although to differing effect. In accordance with the policy, all teachers mark pupils' work frequently and most write helpful comments about how it can be improved. Where teachers do this particularly well, for example in English and humanities, they write very specific guidance to help pupils demonstrate what they have learnt, but to a higher standard. This has a very positive impact on pupils' progress in these classes. However, some teachers follow the academy policy without giving enough thought to how their feedback could actually help pupils move on. For example, they write that pupils should 'give more detail' but do not suggest what this might relate to. Pupils clearly find this unhelpful as they do not respond to what their teachers have written.

Teachers do not yet check on pupils' learning in lessons closely enough. Consequently, they do not pick up quickly enough if pupils are finding the work too easy. This means that the level of challenge for pupils, across all their subjects, is still not high enough. This is particularly the case for the most-able pupils. Pupils frequently complete tasks, often on worksheets, that limit the development of the responses they can make, without fully understanding how the task connects to what they are learning. This means they do not develop their subject knowledge in sufficient depth.

A minority of pupils are affected by having lessons that are 'split' between teachers or by having substantial amounts of time being taught by supply teachers. This has a negative impact on the progress they make.

The academy does not yet have an established policy for checking on grammar and spelling. Many pupils have not developed good writing skills and continue to make basic mistakes in their writing, for example not using capital letters and full stops correctly. This impedes the progress they make as the level of sophistication in their writing does not increase over time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The behaviour of pupils has improved significantly since the last inspection. This is particularly so in relation to their behaviour in lessons. While teaching staff continue to raise concerns about pupils' behaviour when moving around the academy, this was not observed during this inspection.

Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are largely friendly and respectful. Pupils are polite to visitors and keen to describe what has improved at the academy. They do say that their lessons are interrupted by low-level disruption but that the vast majority of pupils comply with teachers' directions. However, some teachers still fail to apply the academy's behaviour policy when faced with challenging behaviour. This undermines the otherwise good progress that has been made in this aspect of the academy's provision.

Academy records show that all forms of behaviour sanctions are reducing. This includes exclusions and removal from lessons. There have been no permanent exclusions at all this term, which is a significant improvement on last year. Pupils who are most at risk of this sanction have personalised pathways which, for some, includes education off-site and work-related learning.

Systems for ensuring pupils' safety are now more effective. Internal truancy has reduced significantly. Those pupils who spoke to the inspector stated that 'you simply couldn't get away with it now'. Attendance at the academy and in classes is checked carefully. A new attendance team was established in January, and there are early signs that they are starting to have a positive impact on improving pupils' attendance. However, overall it remains low in comparison to the national average.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

From September, the Principal has pulled together a new leadership team. This comprises herself and two vice-principals, one of whom has been placed in the academy by the academy's sponsor in order to augment the leadership team. Leaders have acted quickly to establish a working environment where learning can take place. They have put into place adequate systems for safeguarding pupils and for tackling poor behaviour. The vast majority of teaching staff who responded to Ofsted's survey agreed that there is a clear vision for improvement in place.

Leaders are now checking on the quality of teaching with greater frequency. While they have the necessary skills to do so, they do not yet draw upon the full range of evidence they have in order to reach secure judgements about the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers. For example, they have not yet identified those classes or groups that teachers struggle to get the best out of. Similarly, while behaviour sanctions are recorded, leaders do not yet analyse these sufficiently well in order to identify where further improvements could be made.

The sponsor's statement of action and the academy improvement plan are now fit for purpose. They contain sufficient detail for governors to check that intended actions are taking place. There are also some useful targets against which to check if actions are successful. However, some targets do not accurately reflect the current picture at the academy; for example, those relating to pupil progress. Leaders identify that these need further refinement.

Governors have undertaken the recommended external review. This was concluded just before this inspection, so the impact of this on improving this aspect of the academy's leadership cannot be reported upon. Similarly, the review of the academy's use of the pupil premium has taken place and a senior leader has been given oversight of this substantial additional funding. There still remains a significant amount of work to be done in order to ensure that this has the maximum impact on improving the life chances of disadvantaged pupils and it is too early to be able to judge how effective this will be.

External support

The academy sponsor and the local authority are working together effectively to support the academy. The sponsor has allocated a member of its senior team to act as a consultant within the academy on a weekly basis. She knows the academy well and supports leaders in their work to improve teaching. The sponsor recognises the need to ensure they hold the local governing body to account more stringently. The external review of governance identified the need to establish more formal monitoring arrangements to ensure they keep a close check on improvements at the academy.

The academy works effectively with The Blackpool Challenge, an area-wide strategy to raise achievement. The local authority has identified the need to work with academy leaders to build the aspirations and self-confidence of pupils within the academy. They have also made available to academy leaders programmes of professional development for teachers. The full impact of these is not yet clear.