

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 September 2016

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 with Mr Jonathan Smart, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 6 and 7 July 2016, 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 that leaders have taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures in May 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Blackpool Borough Council. 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 that took place in 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 enables 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 third monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 July 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, the two vice-principals and other senior leaders. Inspectors observed parts of 10 lessons with senior leaders. Inspectors conducted three work scrutinies. Two of these focused on the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and low-attaining pupils. The other looked at the progress of the 'challenge' cohort in science in Years 9 and 10. These pupils are those whom the academy has identified as having the potential to achieve the highest grades at GCSE.

Inspectors spoke to pupils in class and at breaktimes. The lead inspector met with a panel of pupils to discuss with them the changes in the academy since the last monitoring visit. Inspectors considered the 55 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

The lead inspector also met with two representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and with a representative of Bright Futures Educational Trust (BFET), the academy's sponsor.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the principal has been confirmed in post as the substantive permanent headteacher of the academy. One new governor has been appointed and another has taken on the post of vice-chair. A number of new staff have been appointed from September, ensuring that the core subjects will be staffed by specialist teachers.

The construction works to the new academy building have commenced on site.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders continue to improve all aspects of the academy's work. They act with great determination and have the full support of the staff team. As one teacher wrote: 'Leadership is strong and supportive. I am hopeful for the future of the academy.' Leaders prioritise the right areas for improvement and are mindful of what they need to do in order to improve their monitoring systems. For example, they have put in place a new system for recording and reporting on pupils' progress from September. This has the potential to quickly and directly inform classroom practice after each assessment point.

Their actions are having a demonstrable, positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

Attendance continues to rise, albeit slowly. Former gaps between the progress and attainment of vulnerable groups of pupils, such as those who are disadvantaged, and other pupils, are now closing across all year groups in the academy.

The systems that leaders use to check on and improve teaching are sound. However, recent focused reviews of subject areas were not informed sufficiently well by data about pupils' progress. Therefore, leaders have been unable to accurately identify what lies behind some of the remaining weaknesses in subjects, such as boys' progress in the lower year groups in English.

Governors have acted on the findings of the last monitoring inspection. They have worked with BFET to ensure that they have acted upon all the areas for improvement recommended from the external review of governance. A new vice-chair has recently been appointed and a new governor, the headteacher of one of the trust's primary schools, has joined the governing body, bringing in additional educational expertise. They now have an increased capacity to oversee the academy's performance and to offer challenge to leaders.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The vast majority of teachers have high expectations, plan lessons assiduously and expect the most from their pupils. This translates into a calm, purposeful atmosphere around the academy during lesson times. Teachers continue to follow the academy's policies on teaching, learning and assessment. The care they take over their written feedback to pupils is having a noticeable impact on pupils' progress over time. However, pupils report, and their books show, that homework is not set regularly, so they have few opportunities to develop their independent learning skills away from the direct supervision of teachers.

All teachers now focus on basic standards of literacy in books. They regularly ask pupils to check on their spellings, punctuation and grammar. This is particularly helpful for low-attaining pupils. Teachers also plan for pupils to have frequent opportunities to write extended pieces, where they can apply their literacy skills to different styles of writing. This was seen by inspectors to be particularly effective in Year 9 science laboratory books, where pupils accurately record their practical work and critically analyse the findings of their experiments.

Each class has a 'challenge' cohort of pupils, who have the potential to achieve the highest grades at GCSE. However, few teachers have the necessary skills to know how to cater for the most able in their subjects. Much of the work for these pupils is simply 'more of the same', and they frequently have to complete work that is too easy for them before they get on to the 'challenge' task. These pupils are not yet making sufficient progress, given their ability levels.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Teachers and pupils confirm that behaviour continues to improve and that the academy is in 'a different place' to where it was a year ago. Pupils are generally punctual to lessons, with some encouragement from their teachers. The majority behave well at all times, and their books show they take pride in their work. A few pupils continue to struggle to engage and they are sometimes not challenged early enough by their teachers, to the detriment of other pupils in the class.

However, school records show that serious misbehaviour has rapidly declined over the course of the school year. The number of days lost to fixed-term exclusions has fallen by 42% on the same time last year, and the number of incidents has fallen term by term this year. Additionally, the use of internal exclusion routes is similarly falling.

Since the last monitoring inspection, leaders have worked hard to improve communications with pupils about bullying, when it is reported, and the actions they take to resolve it. Those pupils who spoke to inspectors said that, while poor language was relatively common, bullying was rare and they themselves felt confident in dealing with it.

Attendance continues to gradually improve. However, too many pupils are persistently absent and this is having a significant effect on the progress they can make in their subjects. Almost a third of Year 10 pupils have less than 90% attendance. This continues to pose a serious challenge to the academy.

Outcomes for pupils

At the time of this inspection, Year 11 had completed their GCSE examinations. Leaders report that they continue to expect to see an improvement on headline achievement figures from last year, but they will still be far below national averages. Pupils' average score is likely to be below a good pass grade on the new GCSE scoring system. However, leaders have worked well with external partners to secure the accuracy of teachers' assessments. This information shows an improvement, with gaps between vulnerable groups of pupils and other pupils narrowing across the academy.

The progress seen in pupils' workbooks reflects the positive picture that is now evident in achievement data. Pupils are making much more progress now, including in subjects that were previously weak, such as in science. This reflects the impact of improved curriculum planning and a focus on getting teaching and behaviour right in each lesson. However, work shows that the most able pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their understanding in depth and the least able are not supported well enough. Some former staffing decisions have meant that the least able have made poor progress with non-specialist teachers. Leaders are aware

of this and have redesigned both how pupils will be grouped next year, and how these groups will be staffed.

The academy has not yet moved to fully implementing the new national curriculum at key stage 3. Consequently, work in books does not reflect the increased academic rigour that is now seen in GCSE work. This means that pupils are not being well prepared for tackling the new GCSEs from an early start, nor are teachers building on what pupils can already do having followed the primary curriculum.

External support

The sponsor continues to organise additional support to the academy, largely through the use of subject specialists to help with confirming teachers' assessments. They have also supported subject leaders to gain more experience in checking on the quality of teaching and learning in their departments. This work has not been as effective as it could have been, as activity was not focused on what the academy knows about the strengths and weaknesses of each subject.

The sponsor is in the process of developing trust-wide systems for reporting on achievement and for supporting governance. The trust has now ensured that governors have the necessary support to respond to the findings of their external review. They have promised additional support for governors to manage their oversight of the academy's finances. However, this was not yet in place at the time of this inspection.

The trust has paid for an external review of safeguarding. This usefully identifies strengths and recommended areas for improvement in the academy's policies and systems. This is particularly helpful given the number of complex safeguarding issues that academy staff deal with on a weekly basis.