

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

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566930
Direct F 01695 729320

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Mr M Davidovic
Headteacher
Lawnswood School
Ring Road
West Park
Leeds
LS16 5AG

Dear Mr Davidovic

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Lawnswood School

Following my visit with Ariane Roberts, Pankaj Gulab and Keith Worrall, additional inspectors to your school on 03 and 04 February 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed but before confirming any such appointment it should be discussed briefly first with Ofsted, if possible with Her Majesty's Inspector who is monitoring the school's improvement.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of Governors and the Director of Children's Services for Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Lawnswood School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 03 and 04 February 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, a number of senior and middle leaders, including those with responsibility for safeguarding, groups of students, the chair of governors, the School Improvement Partner and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous inspection a deputy headteacher has left. A number of changes have been made to roles at senior and middle management levels.

Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Achievement remains inadequate, as at the time of the previous inspection. However, inspectors noted that in some lessons achievement was improving. In good lessons, where work was designed to challenge students, they made good progress, often working at standards above the national average. Nevertheless, students' progress in the majority of lessons observed was only satisfactory.

The school's current data and the examination results attained thus far in the academic year also show an improving picture, in that students appear to be currently on track towards improved attainment at GCSE in 2010. This increase is attributable mainly to the school's focus on intervening to support students who have been identified as working near the borderline of a good grade at GCSE or who are at risk of underachieving. New courses that have been introduced, such as in science, are better meeting the needs of some students and, consequently, contributing to improving achievement. Through a raising attainment group a growing proportion of staff are aware of what students can achieve and have identified additional help for where they fall behind. This positive initiative aims to help the school to raise standards and thereby improve students' achievement.

The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities remains inadequate. It is better in English and mathematics than in other subjects. The school has reviewed its curriculum and has concluded that some courses do not meet the needs of these students well. Consequently, it has introduced some new courses, such as the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness award, which have encouraged some students to attend school more regularly. As a result, these students are enjoying some success.

The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is rigorously tracked in the same way as the progress of all other groups. Students with extreme learning needs are identified and supported on entry to the school, but the school has not yet identified the additional support required for other groups of students.

Other relevant outcomes for students

Attendance remains low, as at the time of the previous inspection. The number of students with persistent absence is still high. Two senior leaders have now taken over responsibility for attendance and the school is in the process of appointing additional staff to support this key issue. A detailed analysis of attendance has led to new systems and structures. The school is using data more effectively to highlight students at risk of becoming persistent absentees. Action taken, involving parents and carers, and students, has led to better attendance on the part of a significant majority of these students.

Although there are improved systems in place and the new leaders are clear about what needs to be done and how to do it, systems are too new to show real impact as yet. Current attendance levels remain similar to those noted for 2009. Progress on this key issue is therefore inadequate.

Punctuality to lessons requires improvement. Students linger on corridors and move with a lack of urgency from one lesson to another. Consequently, the start of lessons is disrupted frequently by students arriving late and this detracts from learning. The school has recently begun to focus on students' punctuality to school in the mornings and afternoons. Early indications are that this is having a positive effect.

Behaviour is improving as a result of some recent initiatives. Many students are pleasant and polite in lessons and around school, although there is still some boisterous behaviour in corridors. In lessons where behaviour is good this is often as a result of engaging and challenging teaching. However, in a few lessons observed where there is a lack of challenge or inaccurate match of tasks set to students' needs and abilities there were incidents of poor and disruptive behaviour. Consequently, in those lessons students do not fully engage in learning and make only adequate progress. However, teachers are increasingly deploying effective strategies for managing such occurrences.

Senior leaders have analysed data relating to disruptive behaviour in lessons. This has led to intervention strategies focused on particular groups of students. For example, a group of Year 9 students are currently on 'parenting contracts'. Two Year 9 forms are being closely monitored as a means of promoting improved behaviour.

A stepped programme of sanctions is contributing to improvements in behaviour. Students report that staff are now more consistent in how they apply this system



when dealing with disruptive behaviour. Where disruption occurs more frequently the school provides staff with support and coaching in managing behaviour.

The efficient use of an electronic database to record and monitor patterns of behaviour has resulted in fewer incidents of poor behaviour remaining unresolved. Students say that behaviour has improved greatly both in lessons and around the school since September. This is echoed in a recent school survey.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve attendance so it is at least in line with the national average – inadequate
- Improve students' behaviour by ensuring consistent implementation of strategies for behaviour management across the school – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

The school has taken appropriate steps to review teaching and learning. An audit of current staff skills highlighted strengths and areas for improvement. A number of effective professional development strategies have been put into place. Students confirm teachers have higher expectations of what students can do than before.

Teaching observed on the inspection was mainly satisfactory but in a number of lessons teaching was good. This closely mirrors the school's own judgements. Teaching is improving as a result of more effective planning and more consistent application of the policy for managing behaviour.

The vast majority of teachers now use a standardised format for planning lessons and so approaches are more consistent. This format has helped teachers to focus more clearly on the needs of students. However, the quality of delivery of these lesson plans varies. Consequently, the rate of progress in some lessons is too slow for students to catch up on past underachievement. Every faculty has a nominated lead teacher who has been trained in coaching skills. They have begun to work with colleagues to improve their practice. This new initiative has been received positively.

Teachers are becoming more proficient in using assessment information when planning and delivering their lessons. However, some teachers use this more effectively than others. For example, in a good GCSE food technology lesson students were actively engaged in discussing the criteria for GCSE practical work and reached a clearer understanding of how to reach the highest grades. Opportunities for students to assess their own and others' work are more frequent, though not yet widespread. This is helping individual students to understand their progress better.

In effective lessons, teachers were demonstrating high expectations and had planned their lessons well to meet the needs of all students. Teachers' enthusiasm and good subject knowledge, and the good relationships between teacher and



students, meant that learning proceeded at a good pace. Activities were varied, allowing both for collaborative work and individual study, to encourage learning. Teachers made good use of assessment to help raise standards further. This resulted in good behaviour as students were clearly enjoying the lessons.

In less effective lessons the teaching was very functional and students were not fully engaged or motivated. Teachers' expectations were lower and students did not show the energy or enthusiasm required to make good progress. Some students, often boys, develop a casual attitude to learning, leading to them being easily distracted and sometimes disrupting the learning of others.

Teachers' use of information and communication technology (ICT) is becoming more widespread. This adds a further dimension to students' learning by generating higher levels of interest and, in some cases, active participation among all students. This was very evident in a good Year 7 history lesson where students were using the integrated whiteboard, leading to enjoyment and good progress.

The school's specialism makes a satisfactory contribution to improving achievement. It contributes to the curriculum through providing extra equipment and computer software that have enhanced students' experiences in lessons. Opportunities and choices in mathematics and ICT have been extended. The specialism's contribution to the community is more limited.

Progress on the area for improvement:

- Raise the quality of teaching by making sure that staff have sufficiently high expectations of students and plan learning effectively – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Members of the senior leadership team, together with the local authority and governors, have established a clear and appropriate set of priorities for action. Their self-evaluation is accurate. They recognise the urgent need for achievement and other aspects of the school's work to improve.

Since the previous inspection there have been changes to the roles of senior leaders and some middle leaders. Early indications are that these are proving beneficial, with collaborative working offering the potential to drive forward improvements. The school has thus far made satisfactory progress on three of the four key issues. The leadership team is building up capacity with some new, keen leaders at both senior and middle levels, who have a good grasp of priorities and have begun some initiatives for improvement. However, as yet, it is too early to see the impact of many of these.

Governors have strengthened their mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school so that they can keep a closer watch on how effectively the



school is implementing actions that will lead to improvement. They have good awareness of the issues facing the school. They are now asking for more specific information about the impact of actions and in this way are beginning to challenge the school better.

The school is making satisfactory progress in addressing safeguarding issues. Students say that they feel safe, that they know who to talk to if they have any concerns and that their views are listened to. They say that there have been improvements in safeguarding arrangements and that opportunities are growing for them to get involved in the life of the school and to be able to contribute their views.

The recent school survey of students' views indicates that students feel increasingly safe at the school. However, a group of students expressed continuing concerns about movement of students on corridors and stairs at breaks and lunchtimes, saying that this was potentially unsafe for younger students.

The Respect programme is reinforcing expectations of safer behaviour throughout the school. Students are being encouraged to develop mutual respect and tolerance of others, for example a Year 10 assembly highlighted the responsibility of all students to respect each other and behave positively. Students in the sixth form are trained as mentors to support and coach pupils lower down the school in developing positive behaviour.

In discussion, students say that bullying is not an issue at the school. A confidential text messaging service has been introduced for students who feel vulnerable or are being bullied. The school has provided appropriate space for vulnerable students who wish to seek refuge from the hurly-burly of the school day. A 'safe room' and the learning support unit provide places to sit quietly without distractions

A Year 7 nurture group has been established to provide support for students who have been identified as being at risk of potential disaffection. Students involved in the nurture group receive mentoring and one-to-one support, providing them with positive role models and helpful strategies for managing behaviour.

Responsibility for safeguarding is allocated to two members of the school's senior leadership team. The line management structure for this is insufficiently clear and some aspects of how the school monitors safeguarding, for example the recording of relevant management meetings and communication of information, are too informal.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that systems and procedures for the safeguarding of students are fully effective – satisfactory



External support

The support provided by the local authority and the School Improvement Partner is satisfactory and has enabled the school to make satisfactory progress thus far on most of the key issues for improvement. However, attendance remains inadequate. The school would benefit from further advice and guidance on this and on how best to manage safeguarding, for example by learning more about good practice.

The local authority's statement of action has been accepted by Ofsted. The impact of the actions contained in this is satisfactory. A consultant to the headteacher is helping with the setting of priorities and determining the strategy to follow. Support and advice are helping to build capacity in leadership and management, by strengthening the skills of senior leaders to drive forward initiatives. Training and consultancy have raised the awareness of staff as a whole as to the features of good teaching. The quality of teaching is beginning to show some improvement. The school feels support from the local authority has been good.