

Suite 22  
West Lancashire Investment  
Centre  
Maple View  
White Moss Business Park  
Skelmersdale, WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524 Direct T 01695 566930  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk Direct F 01695 729320  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) e-mail [gtunncliffe@cfbt.com](mailto:gtunncliffe@cfbt.com)



11 June 2010

Mr P King  
Headteacher  
The Darfield Foulstone School of Creative Arts  
Nanny Marr Road  
Darfield  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire  
S73 9AB

Dear Mr King

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Darfield Foulstone School of Creative Arts

Following my visit with Pankaj Gulab, Additional Inspector, to your school on 09 and 10 June 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 January 2010. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to agreement with the Lead Inspector.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted 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 Director of Children's Services for Barnsley.

Yours sincerely

Sara Morrissey  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of The Darfield Foulstone School of Creative Arts

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 09 and 10 June 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including 21 parts of lessons and one tutorial period. Documents were scrutinised and meetings held with the headteacher and other nominated staff, two groups of students, the headteacher of the partner school, and a representative from the local authority. A telephone conversation was also held with the National Challenge Adviser. On this visit, it was not possible to meet with a representative of the governing body.

## Context

Staffing has remained relatively stable since the last inspection. The school has been successful in recruiting suitably qualified teachers to fill vacancies from September 2010. A new head of science took up post in June 2010. At the time of this monitoring visit, Year 11 students were participating in booster classes in advance of their GCSE examinations. A partnership arrangement has recently been established between the school and a secondary school in York.

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

Students' attainment and achievement were reported in detail at the time of the last inspection.

Current assessment information for students in Year 11 indicates that targeted and intensive support has already increased the numbers of students gaining a good GCSE pass in English and mathematics. The school is confident that the outcomes of final examinations this summer will confirm further improvement in the proportion of students attaining five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics. Students at risk of significant underachievement have also benefited from different curriculum pathways and, as a consequence, more are likely to achieve five GCSE passes at grades A\* to G.

In lessons in other year groups, progress made by groups of students remains uneven and is not good enough to close gaps in their learning and raise attainment over time. In too many instances the quality of learning is limited by planning that does not take into account precisely enough the needs of different students. Girls often make less progress in lessons than boys because they do not participate as actively in their learning and are content to remain passive unless their interest is captured by stimulating tasks. There are pockets of good practice where the quality of learning and progress is brisk because teaching challenges students to think independently and develop knowledge and skills through a variety of activities that

promote learning and enjoyment. However, this is not consistent enough across the school to raise attainment at the necessary pace. Furthermore, students have not all acquired the necessary basic skills to enable them to participate fully in independent learning activities.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Close the gap between attainment at Darfield Foulstone and the national average – inadequate.

Other relevant outcomes for students

Behaviour in lessons is variable but mostly satisfactory. Around school, students are generally courteous although there is some boisterous behaviour on corridors during lesson changes. Students respond positively to the supportive working relationships established with many staff. Where teaching is most effective their attitudes to learning are good. However, where activities do not capture their attention students become passive or engage in low-level chatter. Since the last inspection, attendance rates have remained above average and persistent absence has reduced further to below the national levels.

The effectiveness of provision

Lesson observations during the inspection reflect a recent improvement in the quality of teaching when compared with the outcomes of the local authority's review in April. Teachers are prepared to take more risks in engaging students in a variety of practical activities. It is too early, however, to measure the impact of new strategies on the pace of students' learning and progress.

A common format to lesson planning has been adopted which is monitored to ensure consistency in its use. While this format offers a suitable basis on which to plan, the available assessment information is not used consistently to tailor activities to meet the variety of individual needs within the class. Planned activities and associated resources do not provide enough opportunities to challenge students or extend their learning and secure good progress. Occasionally, well-drafted plans are not implemented effectively to enable students to make the progress they might.

In the best lessons teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and begin learning activities promptly. Briskly paced activities motivate students to learn and regular opportunities enable them to review their work with peers. Teachers have high expectations and engage with students through regular exchange using challenging questioning and praise where appropriate. However, this is not the case in most lessons, where teachers' expectations of students' active participation are lower. This results in progress that is no better than satisfactory. Time for students to reflect on their learning is not always provided. In the weakest lessons expectations are too low, activities fail to engage students and their focus wanes,

often leading to low-level disruption. Students are aware of their targets and where they are currently working, mostly as a result of end-of-unit tests or assessments. The quality of marking is variable. Diagnostic marking does not always give students the information they need to help them identify the small steps needed to raise their attainment.

Through collaboration with the local authority, senior leaders have developed a comprehensive picture of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Groups of staff have been trained to act as coaches and almost two thirds are involved in reviewing aspects of their practice as part of this programme. This is a recent development and, while early indications suggest it is being positively received, its impact on the effectiveness of teaching has yet to be seen. A 'transforming learning group' has been formed to drive the various initiatives to improve teaching and learning. Its focus has initially been on developing a policy for improvement and plans are in hand for the group to engage actively in the implementation of the policy.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Following the last inspection, progress made by senior leaders in tackling the priorities for improvement was initially slow. Improvement plans were drafted and then revised following input from local authority officers. A range of plans are currently in use. These include the raising attainment plan associated with the National Challenge initiative, the school's development plan and the local authority's statement of action. This has created tension among senior leaders about which plan to follow to drive improvement and thus has limited progress made in sharpening the focus on key priorities. Plans identify appropriate steps to meet overarching success criteria. However, there are insufficient milestone checks to measure progress towards targets effectively in the short and medium term. A simple strategic overview has not been established by leaders to demonstrate how planned actions will secure sustainable improvement for the future.

The pace of change has recently begun to accelerate. The headteacher has re-defined senior roles to provide greater clarity and line managers' responsibilities have been sharpened through a more rigorous programme of review meetings between senior and middle leaders. Established systems to set targets and collate assessment data are generally reliable and being developed further to enable teachers to analyse more precisely the progress made by different groups of students. Scrutinies of students' work and teachers' planning have helped senior and middle leaders to identify areas of strength and weakness and this is beginning to inform a programme of coaching and professional development for staff. The outcomes of a recent local authority review of the school's progress helped senior leaders to identify the type of external support which would be most helpful to

improve practice. Consequently, the range of teaching strategies to promote active learning has increased. Nevertheless, as yet, senior leaders have not introduced a programme of lesson observations by which they can measure the impact of developments in teaching on learning and progress.

The role of middle leadership is underdeveloped. Middle leaders have welcomed the increased opportunities to discuss the progress made by students in their subject area through more frequent meetings with senior managers. They are beginning to use the outcomes of marking and work scrutinies to ensure that agreed routines are followed consistently and to hold staff teams more to account for their work. However, middle leaders are less confident about making judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. This is a missed opportunity and limits their capacity to evaluate effectively the work in their areas of responsibility.

The director of the subject specialism is providing purposeful leadership. Students in Year 11 have already met the targets for the school's specialist subjects. The director of the specialism is part of the transforming learning group and two specialist subject staff are contributing to improving practice across a range of subjects.

The headteacher is highly committed to securing sustainable improvement in the school. He has ensured that the day-to-day management of the school has continued to proceed smoothly. This is reflected in the generally positive morale of staff and further improvements to aspects of the school's work that are acknowledged strengths, such as students' attendance. Leaders recognise that the additional capacity provided by external support has been significant in accelerating the recent progress made. In order to demonstrate capacity for sustainable long-term improvement, the school's leaders will need to take much greater responsibility for driving improvement.

Representatives of the governing body contribute to the monitoring of progress made by the school through the meetings of the school improvement strategy group, informed by extensive and detailed reports from the headteacher.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that quality assurance is more robust and effective – inadequate.

External support

Amendments have been made to the local authority's statement of action in response to feedback from Her Majesty's Inspectors and it is now fit for purpose. The local authority has provided significant challenge and support for the school since the last inspection. Consultant support has been valued in English, mathematics and science and helped to target strategies to tackle a significant

legacy of underachievement as well as to develop good practice. The recent links established with the partner school in York holds much promise. Initial feedback from meetings and training workshops has been positive and contributed to the recent improvements in teaching. The National Challenge Adviser provides suitable challenge and support for the school in its implementation of the raising attainment plan. His role will continue for the foreseeable future to broker additional support for the school as required.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Produce a simple, strategic overview to clarify and prioritise actions to be taken to meet success criteria.
- Implement a programme of lesson observations to measure the impact of developments in teaching on learning and progress.
- Increase the role of middle leaders in the school's self-evaluation.