

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

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted
Direct T 01695 566933
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email: ggleaden@cfbt.com



6 February 2015

Mrs Maria Sharratt
Headteacher
Litherland High School
Sterrix Lane
Litherland
Liverpool
Merseyside
L21 0DB

Dear Mrs Sharratt

Special measures monitoring inspection of Litherland High School

Following my visit with Steven Baker and John Leigh, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 4 and 5 February 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which 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:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), and the Director of Children's Services for Sefton.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2014

- Improve teaching so that students in all year groups make at least expected progress, especially in English and mathematics by:
 - assessing students' learning and progress accurately and ensure lessons build on the knowledge, skills and understanding students bring with them from primary school
 - making sure students receive feedback and marking that supports them to improve their work and achieve higher levels or grades
 - examining where there are gaps in students' literacy and mathematical skills and developing and reinforcing these skills in every subject
 - making sure teaching takes account of the differing ability of students in the class and provides the right amount of challenge for the most able students
 - ensuring that students who are identified as having special educational needs, including those identified as having behavioural difficulties, receive the right amount of support and challenge in lessons
 - using the good practice in teaching in the school to support improvement where it is needed. Improve attendance and reduce the level of exclusion by helping all groups of students feel more engaged with their learning and to achieve well.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - checking the progress of different groups of students more rigorously and setting high expectations for the academic achievement of all students
 - ensuring that, when teaching is monitored, sufficient attention is given to the progress students make
 - ensuring that action plans include measurable outcomes for students
 - using the existing good practice in subject leadership in the school to support improvement in other subjects
 - undertaking an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted has made recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 4 and 5 February 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, associate headteacher, senior leaders, heads of department, groups of teachers and pupils, the Chair of the IEB and the executive Principal of a national support school. Several learning walks were conducted as well as lesson observations which focused on English, mathematics, science and the humanities. Inspectors watched behaviour around the school.

Context

The associate headteacher commenced duties on 1 November 2014. An assistant headteacher for achievement and progress took up post at the beginning of February 2015. An assistant headteacher with responsibility for teaching and learning took up post in December 2014. A new leader of English and literacy was appointed to the leadership team on 1 February 2015. Consultations on moving towards academy status under the umbrella of the Heath Family Multi-Academy Trust have concluded and the school is now awaiting a decision on academy status by the Department for Education.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Senior leaders and staff continue to build upon the improved GCSE results in 2013/14. Current school records indicate that students are making better progress. Attainment and progress gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers continue to narrow. There is a much stronger emphasis on students' progress by senior leaders, middle managers and teachers. More focused and fine-tuned assessment data enables better planning of lessons so that the needs of all students are better understood. Intervention strategies, particularly at Key Stage 4, are more focused to individual student's needs. Progress coordinators are beginning to have an impact in placing students' progress at the centre of improvement activity. Senior leaders are realistic and acknowledge the need to sustain and accelerate attainment and progress in GCSE results.

Students' reading ages have significantly improved in Year 7 and 8 with the introduction of the accelerated readers programme. However, school leaders acknowledge the need for a greater emphasis on reading for pleasure. Inspectors spoke to too many students who were not currently reading a book or intending to do so.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics and science is improving at a quick pace. Some very positive learning and student progress were observed in

these subjects. This was especially the case where activities were consistently challenging and closely matched to students' abilities and needs. The pace of improvement, however, is less marked in English. In too many lessons students were not sufficiently challenged and teacher expectations of students were too low. Some teachers' questioning did not challenge and encourage deeper thinking.

Marking has improved and students' books are regularly scrutinised by senior leaders. However, there still remain too many students' exercise books where there is limited or no dialogue between teacher and student on the next steps in developing understanding. Relationships between teachers and students are almost always strong and positive. An increasing number of classrooms present visually strong working environments with recent students' work festooning the walls. Art, modern foreign languages and humanities present challenging and visually exciting work environments that students respond to well. However, there remain some classrooms where display is bland and there is little reference to a subject within the curriculum.

There is a strong focus on improving provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs. Comprehensive staff training has been conducted. Tracking and monitoring systems have been improved. Further specialist training is ongoing for teaching assistants to increase their skills, accountability and support planning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour around the school and in class is much improved. Students are polite and respectful of each other, staff and visitors. They are aware of how to behave. Students spoken to confirmed that the application of the school behaviour code has become more consistent across all subjects and lessons. Students also noted that bullying had significantly decreased. Students now make a key contribution to a well-ordered and harmonious school community. This was demonstrated by their behaviour at a lunchtime piano and song recital in the school foyer. Students' behaviour, concentration and their appreciation of the talents and endeavours of their peers was impressive.

Students say that they feel safe in school. Persistent absences have declined. Punctuality has significantly improved. Senior leaders are aware of the need for further improvement in overall students' attendance rates.

Students' participation in school life is increasingly promoted. A mock magistrates' court group has been formed and a school debating society is about to be introduced. A school junior leadership team has been elected and works with senior leaders on how students can best contribute to school improvement. Student Anne Frank ambassadors organised part of the school's response to Holocaust week. Senior leaders and staff have an increasing focus on developing a more proactive culture of student engagement and the development of their civic understanding, oracy and self-confidence skills.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and associate headteacher have worked well together in a relatively short period of time and together are building and reinforcing the capacity of the school to improve. They are assiduous in their planning for improvement. Senior leaders have a strong focus on evaluating the impact of actions to enable improvement. The capacity of senior leadership has been strengthened by recent appointments. The school improvement plan has been reassessed and fine-tuned to identify weaknesses and the ways and means to quickly tackle them. Monitoring systems are well focused and actions to elicit improvement clearly stated, actioned and reviewed. All staff spoken to by inspectors were highly supportive of senior leaders and the direction and impact of the school improvement agenda.

The partnership with the Heath Family Multi-Academy Trust has been highly beneficial. In particular this partnership has enabled the development of better focused continuous professional development programmes for staff. Fine-tuned training sessions have strengthened the capacity of teachers and enabled better consistency in the overall quality of teaching. Senior leaders acknowledge that further training and development work is required so that all middle leaders fully grasp the nature of their roles and responsibilities and become more proactive and skilful in driving the improvement agenda forward. Senior leaders undertake regular learning walks to check on students' progress, the quality of teaching and the standards of marking in students' exercise books.

The IEB receive detailed and informative reports on school performance. It has strengthened its monitoring of school performance being both supportive and challenging of the senior leadership. The IEB has established a strong focus on attainment and progress indicators. Following a review of the pupil premium (additional government funding) recommendations have been put in place and actions and their impact are monitored effectively by senior and middle leaders and the IEB.

External support

As identified earlier in the report, very strong support is given to the school by the Heath Family Multi-Academy Trust and particularly in staff training and the ongoing task of building the capacity of senior and middle leaders. This also includes the support of a national leader in education (NLE) from the Heath School, Runcorn. School leaders continue to use external consultants well to promote and inform the improvement agenda. The local authority continues to offer support and guidance as the school continues its improvement journey at an ever increasing pace.