

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

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566932  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:** hcarnall@cfbt.com



12 December 2013

Mr Des Herlihy  
Interim Executive Principal  
Furness Academy  
Park Drive  
Barrow-in-Furness  
Cumbria  
LA13 9BB

Dear Mr Herlihy

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Furness Academy**

Following my visit with Derek Barnes Additional Inspector and Kathleen Harris Additional Inspector to your school on 10 and 11 December 2013, 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 have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2013. 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 sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint NQTs.

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Cumbria and as below.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2013**

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, and reduce rapidly the variation in the quality of teaching across the academy, by:
  - developing and implementing an academy-wide strategy for improving teaching, monitoring its impact and holding staff closely to account for agreed actions
  - eradicating the few remaining instances of inadequate teaching and sharing more effectively the examples of good and outstanding practice across the academy
  - ensuring that lessons include opportunities for students to be more actively engaged in their learning and that teachers move them on quickly to more challenging work
  - increasing the impact of homework and marking, and checking more effectively that they are making a difference to students' learning.
  
- Develop and implement a focused strategy to rapidly improve achievement, so that it is at least good for all students, to include:
  - raising the expectations of staff of what all students can achieve, including through the use of challenging targets for every student
  - improving the impact of support provided for students with special educational needs, including through strengthening the work of teaching assistants
  - ensuring that funding provided through the pupil premium is effective in raising the achievement of those students for whom it is intended
  - eradicating any instances of poor behaviour that slow students' learning in lessons, and reducing further the time lost through fixed-term exclusions from the academy
  - improving the attendance of all groups of students, and reducing more rapidly the proportion of students who are persistently absent from the academy
  - ensuring that changes to the curriculum and decisions to enter students for external examinations at different points in the school year do not have a detrimental impact on the achievement of any students, including the most-able.
  
- Improve the strategic leadership, management and governance of the academy by ensuring that:
  - action planning is based on a thorough and accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy's performance, and that plans are regularly reviewed and updated in the light of progress
  - information about students' progress, attendance and behaviour is used to anticipate underachievement and respond more effectively
  - leaders' checks on teaching quality are closely linked to a detailed analysis of the progress that pupils make in each subject
  - performance management procedures include a close link between challenging targets for staff and decisions about pay and salary progression
  - governors have a clear view of the performance of the academy and more effectively hold leaders and managers to account for improvements
  - the governing body takes part in, and responds to, an external review of governance to identify what support and training governors need.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 10 to 11 December 2013.**

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Interim Executive Principal, the sponsors, members of the governing body, the senior leadership team and a selection of middle leaders. The sponsor's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated. Inspectors also considered a range of other evidence including short and long-term teaching plans, achievement data.

### **Context**

The Principal has resigned. A small number of teachers have left and have been replaced. A new Assistant Principal has been appointed to strengthen the existing team for teaching and learning. Two progress leaders have been appointed to lead progress in each key stage.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Key Stage 3 data show that students are making better progress. However, at Key Stage 4 there remains a wide gulf between the targets for achievement and students' current progress. This is particularly evident in mathematics, for students who are disabled or have special educational needs and those for whom the pupil premium provides support. This is because too much teaching still requires improvement or is inadequate.

Early entry to examinations is no longer used and a wealth of interventions is underway led by senior leaders and progress managers. These interventions rightly focus upon the groups who are underachieving the most.

Achievement for those who are disabled or have special educational needs remains weak. This is because some teachers do not plan to meet their individual needs. In physical education, the progress of some students was severely hampered because they were not wearing physical education kit and, therefore, not allowed to take part in the physical activities. They were not given alternative work that allowed them to make adequate progress.

Around 40 students are currently educated off-site, their achievement is tracked, but there are a number of students who regularly fail to attend the off-site provision and, therefore, make no progress. Some students were observed in an 'outdoor classroom', which is part of the school's own alternative provision. Students were taught in a mixed-ability group and made inadequate progress because learning was not tailored to their individual needs.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching varies from outstanding to inadequate. A significant number of staff are on support plans to help them improve their teaching. Inspectors saw examples of good practice where the school had identified underperformance and worked with teachers to good effect.

In a Year 9 religious education lesson, students were inspired to think very carefully about the rights and wrongs of genetic engineering. The lesson was meticulously planned and allowed students to ponder and reflect upon some big moral questions. There was a calm and supportive climate for learning driven by the teacher, expectations were high and students responded by pushing themselves to think critically about very big issues.

Approximately half the teaching seen was good, with two examples of outstanding practice; one in mathematics and one in drama. Good use is made of the library, including the careers library for Key Stage 3 students. However, not all students can independently read the worksheets they are given. Some students are withdrawn from their timetabled lessons to work in small groups and still make little progress due to the teachers' lack of planning. Some students were observed working purposefully in the internal exclusion unit, but others made no progress because inappropriate work was set.

Scrutiny of long-term teaching plans show that in some subjects, no direction is given to teachers about how they might adjust teaching activities to meet individual learning needs. Furthermore, strategies provided to teachers by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) do not give enough specific detail about how teachers can support students' learning so that they make good or better progress. Likewise, there is no clear guidance to teachers from senior leaders on what their short and long-term planning should include.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Many students spoken with by inspectors say that behaviour is improving. Students say that there are less warnings in lessons and clearer sanctions; they welcome the high supervision by teachers because it makes them feel safe. Fixed-term exclusions have reduced and referrals to the internal exclusion unit have fallen. The number of students educated off-site has increased.

Many students behave very well in lessons and around the school site. They are polite, well-mannered and eager to learn. They are rightly proud of their new school surroundings and keen to sit in the hall at lunchtime and read or browse on their computers. Students who wish to have quiet break times were observed reading or sitting on bean-bags, playing board games or just chatting to friends in one of the rooms supervised by learning support staff. However, there remains a core of students who do not always succeed in lessons and are taken out. Many of these students have specific learning needs that are not met.

During the inspection, students enjoyed a beautifully prepared Christmas lunch in the school restaurant with little supervision. Students waiting outside in the cold to go in for lunch needed more supervision because behaviour was rowdy at times. Even though there is a high presence of staff on duty, they are not highly visible amongst the students.

Procedures for managing attendance and lateness are weak. Too much time is left before parents are notified that their child is not in school and sometimes parents are wrongly informed that their child is not in school, when in fact they are present. The attendance of those students who are educated off-site is not monitored rigorously enough. Targets for the attendance of students eligible for support by the pupil premium are far too low.

Students have a good understanding that racist language is wrong, but they do not have the same appreciation of the offence that may be caused by homophobic language. The anti-

bullying policy does not specify what types of language are acceptable and what may cause offence, nor does it give clear guidance to parents, staff or students on what they must do to report bullying.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Governors are holding senior leaders to account about achievement more effectively. However, they have not reviewed policies and procedures for behaviour, attendance and safeguarding so some poor practice has gone unchecked. Regular meetings involving sponsors, governors and external professionals mean that all of these groups are gaining a better understanding of students' progress. The Interim Executive Principal, senior staff and governors have held meetings with parents to strengthen home-school communication.

The senior team are working more cohesively. However, lines of accountability amongst senior leaders are still blurred and it is unclear what some of the most senior leaders are responsible for improving; the Interim Executive Principal is rightly reviewing job descriptions. Senior leaders had not identified weaknesses in the monitoring and recording of bullying, attendance and lateness.

The production and analysis of data continues to be a key strength of the school. Leaders are working diligently to ensure that data are accurate and have started to compare levels of progress with the work in students' books to identify areas where assessments are inaccurate.

The leadership and management of teaching and learning are improving. Senior leaders are starting to build an accurate picture of the day-to-day quality of teaching but it is still too optimistic. Monitoring activities are not sharply focussed on the achievement of different groups.

Middle leaders are beginning to evaluate their own departments but some still have an overgenerous view of standards and the quality of teaching over time. This is reflected in the whole-school self-evaluation. Senior leaders have not challenged middle leaders rigorously enough about the expectations set and standards achieved in their departments.

## **External support**

The academy continues to be supported by two external professionals who bring an increased rigour around the monitoring of students' progress.

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the sponsor has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Urgently review policies for child protection, attendance, accidents, anti-bullying and behaviour to reflect good safeguarding practice and explain clearly procedures for students, teachers and parents to follow.
- Rigorously monitor the quality of provision and safeguarding arrangements for those who are educated off-site.