

CfBT Inspection Services  
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View

Skelmersdale

WN8 9TG

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



6 November 2014

Mr Kevin Gill  
Acting Principal  
Furness Academy  
Park Drive  
Barrow-in-Furness  
Cumbria  
LA13 9BB

Dear Mr Gill

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

Following my visit with Clive Hurren and Rebecca Lawton, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 4 and 5 November 2014, 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 fifth 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 academy is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not 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 Governing Body and the Acting Corporate Director of Children's Services for Cumbria.

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 fifth monitoring inspection on 4 and 5 November 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work and met with the acting principal, senior leaders, middle leaders, groups of students and representatives of the governing body and sponsor. Inspectors spoke to a National Leader of Education, recently employed to work with the school. They scrutinised a wealth of documentation including records of performance management, short- and long-term teaching plans, the academy's finances, self-evaluation documentation and school improvement plans.

### **Context**

Over 50 staff left the academy in the summer to take up new posts elsewhere or as a result of redundancies. The interim principal left shortly before the summer. The vice principal was made acting principal and two assistant principals were made acting vice principals with responsibility for achievement and teaching, and learning and achievement respectively. Consultation is underway over the sponsorship of the academy.

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

Achievement has fallen further. Predictions for 2014 GCSE results were not realised and standards remain well below national averages. Some underachievement goes unnoticed by members of the governing body and senior leaders, for example, science. Too many middle ability students follow a science BTEC course rather than a GCSE qualification. This limits their achievement and their options for further study when they leave school. No data around science are included in the school's self-evaluation document.

Underachievement was the lowest among the 35 students who were educated off site last year. Of those students, only one achieved five good GCSEs including English and mathematics even though 12 students were of average ability and capable of achieving C grades. The gap in achievement between students eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) and their peers has widened and for students who are disabled or have special educational needs, it remains inadequate.

Progress observed by inspectors in lessons and through scrutiny of work, with a few exceptions is weak because many teachers do not plan effectively for different abilities and many students still do not receive the basic literacy support they need. Progress is currently weakest in mathematics. This is compounded by a number of non-specialist or non-teaching staff teaching the lowest ability children without any training.

## **The quality of teaching**

There are instances of high-quality teaching, for example in English, but far too much teaching does not allow students to make good or acceptable progress. This is because teachers do not always plan appropriate work to support students' needs, for example if they have difficulty with spelling or writing.

Scrutiny of excluded students' books shows that some, who have been excluded more than once, are making very little progress because they have very weak literacy skills and are not being taught well. Conversely, scrutiny of one English teacher's plans showed very detailed planning for all groups of students covering a wide range of abilities and needs. Unsurprisingly, her books were very well marked and students in her class were observed making rapid progress.

The quality of teaching for those students who follow an alternative curriculum and spend some of their time in vocational courses and work experience is not good enough. This is because staff have not been given the time to plan collaboratively to meet the needs of this group and their timetable is not adapted to their needs.

However, there are signs that their attendance is improving so this is a more positive picture than last year. Year 10 alternative curriculum students are taught in a room that is hot and too small, causing unnecessary discomfort and unease to both teachers and students.

The new system for monitoring teaching and learning relies upon data about students' achievement over time being accurate. However, senior leaders know that data are inaccurate and assessments unreliable, illustrated by the 2014 results that were much lower than predicted. Leaders are currently seeking external moderation to try and gain some accuracy around data.

Senior leaders have had an impact in improving social, moral, spiritual and cultural education and this was demonstrated in a very inspiring assembly led by the senior leader in charge of teaching and learning. Year 10 students showed great respect for others and were impeccably behaved during an assembly about Remembrance. The assembly was very well planned, engaging and highly informative. Students and staff were moved by what they saw.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour around the academy is very mixed. Many students behave very well but students and staff still report too much low-level disruption in lessons. Over half of the staff who responded to the staff survey feel that behaviour is not good. This was confirmed by inspectors.

Bullying logs are still too vague and there is very little bullying recorded. It is unclear what actions have been taken as a result. Some students have been victims of

bullying on more than one occasion. Although an email reporting system has been set up for bullying, some students remain unaware of it.

The leadership and management of inclusion has real strengths but there is not enough capacity within the team to manage day-to-day behaviour as effectively as it could be. Exclusions are reducing and the number of days students spend out of school due to exclusion has reduced significantly. There is a system for behaviour management but it is still used inconsistently by staff and some students are sent out of lessons too readily. The number of overall withdrawals from lessons has reduced from last year, although students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium are over-represented in these figures.

Attendance has improved on the same period last year. There is better attendance in Years 8, 9 and 11, for students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium and for those who are disabled or have special educational needs.

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

There are serious weaknesses in governance and there is a lack of urgency to bring about improvements. Senior leaders rightly do not have confidence in some members of the governing body. Governors have failed to tackle poor performance effectively.

The acting principal has no job description and no performance management targets. Performance management records are incomplete and targets are too broad so it is very difficult to hold staff to account.

Some teachers have been told that they will not receive pay progression this year. However, no-one has reviewed the performance of the senior team. Furthermore, there has been no challenge to the performance of leaders in mathematics and English even though their results remain inadequate.

Members of the governing body do not know enough about the achievement of different subjects and groups. There was poor attendance at the recent standards and effectiveness committee where senior leaders expected to be rigorously challenged for the fall in achievement but this was not the case.

However, some governors, for example a parent governor, are very involved in directly monitoring the quality of teaching, and their support and challenge are very much valued by staff.

The three senior leaders who have stepped up to lead the school while a new principal is found are hard working and have the best interests of the students at heart. However, they lack certain expertise, for example, to tackle the scale of underperformance facing them. Senior leaders say themselves that they are not a

cohesive team. The lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities remains a significant barrier to raising standards.

Self-evaluation is weak and relies too much on secondary evidence. Much important information is omitted and there is a distinct lack of analysis. The school improvement plan is weak and lacks specific criteria by which to measure success. Governors have not played their part in effectively evaluating the strength of either document.

Teachers' planning is not checked regularly or effectively enough, so perpetuating underachievement. The leadership and management of special educational needs are much more efficient and focused. However, much of the £600,000 allocated to help students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is currently spent on staff salaries or unaccounted for, leaving the special educational needs coordinator with no budget to make necessary improvements.

The website does not meet statutory requirements because simple things, such as the pupil premium statement, are not up to date. The single central record meets requirements. There is currently a deficit budget. There are financial reserves to cover the deficit for this year.

### **External support**

Senior leaders are currently being supported by a local headteacher from a good school, a National Leader of Education and a Teaching School. Work is beginning with middle leaders and moderation of assessments. However, all these arrangements are very recent; much of the work has yet to take place so there is no impact.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Urgently strengthen leadership by employing the services of someone who has a track record of school improvement and tackling underperformance.
- Immediately strengthen governance so that governors have a good understanding of how to challenge senior leaders effectively.