

CfBT Inspection Services
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 566932
Direct F 01695 729320
hcarnall@cfbt.com



18 April 2008

Mrs D Spence
Headteacher
Hyde Technology School and Hearing Impaired Resource Base
Old Road
Hyde
Cheshire
SK14 4SP

Dear Mrs Spence

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 17 April 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I also appreciated the opportunity to meet with your School Improvement Partner, the chair of governors and groups of students. Please extend my thanks to all of those involved.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 30 November 2006, the school was asked to:

- Improve students' performance and progress in science
- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in science and the humanities, to ensure it is consistently good throughout the school
- Make management at all levels more accountable in order to ensure provision is good in all areas
- Raise attendance.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

Since the November 2006 inspection, the school has added a second specialism in applied learning to its specialist technology status. In September 2007 it achieved the Eco School Bronze Award, which has recently been upgraded to silver.

Key Stage 4 results in the 2007 examinations indicate that students made satisfactory progress overall during their time in the school, although there are significant variations between subjects and key stages. The proportion of students

attaining at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C was well above the national average: the alternative qualifications on offer continue to make a significant contribution to this. As a result, many students make excellent progress overall in Key Stage 4, although the number of students achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics was below average. In particular, boys' attainment in English dipped further from the previous year. There was a significant improvement in students' science attainment at GCSE, which was above average in 2007. This is evidence of the impact of changes made by the school to the organisation of teaching groups and to the courses on offer.

Students' attainment in Key Stage 3 is below average overall. This was most noticeable in science tests in 2007 and represented inadequate progress in that subject across Years 7 to 9. Girls in particular achieved poorly in science. Fewer students than average reached the higher levels in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

The school is aware of its areas of underperformance and has put a number of strategies into place to remedy these. The most positive impact of these strategies is seen in the improved Key Stage 4 science results, but is not yet evident in Key Stage 3. Despite this, the school's most recent assessments show that it is near to reaching its specialist school targets for Key Stage 3 in 2008.

The sample of lessons observed during this visit concurs with the school's view that improvements are being made in teaching and learning and the proportion of good lessons is increasing. Where weak teaching was identified, coaching and support has been provided and in most cases this has had a positive impact so that very few lessons are now inadequate. The school's accurate self-evaluation acknowledges that significant variations in the quality of teaching remain in some departments, notably in science. Senior leaders have identified the issues which remain in weaker lessons and with the support of local authority advisors and external consultants are implementing strategies to address them. For example, teachers' expectations of what the students are capable of are low and students are not sufficiently engaged in their learning because lessons lack variety or opportunities for practical activities. Although staff have been given guidance on marking and the setting of targets as part of the school's quality assurance system, these are not yet applied consistently.

The common features of more effective lessons include: good questioning skills and the use of assessment to inform future planning; a good variety of challenging activities which motivates students to learn more rapidly; effective use of information and communication technology (ICT); and high quality relationships with mutual respect between teachers and students. As a result of focused training and development, senior and middle leaders are better able to accurately evaluate the quality of teaching and identify areas for improvement. A range of in-school training programmes enables teachers to opt into relevant 'drop-in' sessions focused on specific aspects of teaching and learning, and these are well attended.

The school's commitment to developing 'student voice' has a positive impact on students' self-confidence and sense of belonging. Students know and appreciate that they are listened to and their views taken into account.

The good improvement in the school's overall leadership and management is the most noticeable aspect of changes made since the last inspection. The school's quality assurance system provides very clear guidance and a consistently applied structure. Middle leaders know what is expected of them and are more confident in their role. The monitoring and evaluation cycle includes clear time-scales and expectations which are known and adhered to. Middle managers are accountable for reporting back to senior leaders and governors on the analysis and checking of progress in their subject areas. This in turn impacts on class teachers who are also made more accountable for individual students' progress.

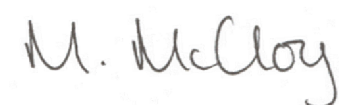
Leadership in science and humanities has improved considerably, building on the strengths which already existed in other departments. Although some issues have yet to be resolved regarding staffing stability in these subjects, the leaders have demonstrated much determination, ability and commitment to improve the quality of provision. Weak practice is challenged and the whole school culture is one of teamwork, collegiality and shared learning.

Hyde was designated as an attendance priority school in January 2007 due to students' below average levels of attendance. It was removed from this category in September when attendance in 2006/07 met the school's published target of 91.6%. Unfortunately, attendance in the autumn term 2007 fell to around 90%. Two factors affecting this were the absence of Bangladeshi students during Eid and a number of families taking holidays in school time, despite the school's stringent procedures to discourage this. Rigorous systems are in place to monitor attendance and intervene where absence is becoming an issue, involving parents in this process. However, overall attendance from January to April 2008 remains just below 90%.

The positive impact of the school's areas of specialism can be seen in the wide choice of applied learning pathways at Key Stage 4 and in the good contribution made by the application of ICT in teaching and learning.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. McCloy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'M' and a trailing 'y'.

Marguerite McCloy
Her Majesty's Inspector