

Nord Anglia Inspections
Anglia House
Carrs Road
Cheadle
Stockport SK8 2LA

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0161 491 4191
Direct F 0161 491 9677



29 February 2008

Dr Therese Quincey
Headteacher
Hylton Red House School
Rutherglen Road
Sunderland
Tyne and Wear
SR5 5LN

Dear Dr Quincey

Ofsted monitoring of Notice to Improve schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 February 2008, for the time you made available for our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to teachers, governors and students who were involved in the inspection and to all who ensured that it ran smoothly and efficiently.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection in July 2007, the school was asked to:

- Raise achievement and standards in all subjects at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Improve levels of attendance.
- Ensure that all teachers take full account of assessment information in order to fully understand the learning needs of all students.
- Ensure that all teachers plan lessons which demonstrate high expectations of students and which fully meet all their learning needs.

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

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has been appointed principal designate of the academy that will open to replace the school in September 2009. In order to prepare for this, she will relinquish her headship at Easter and one of the deputy headteachers will be acting headteacher until closure of the school. The current headteacher will nevertheless continue to have strategic responsibility for the school, in particular for its response to improving those areas identified at the

previous inspection. Since that inspection, an additional deputy headteacher post has been made permanent, securing leadership in mathematics as well as whole-school aspects including data analysis; a new head of science has been appointed, together with a number of newly qualified teachers. Staffing has stabilised, notably in the core subjects; the school's ability to recruit suitably qualified teachers has improved.

Students' results in the 2007 national tests at Key Stage 3 were significantly below average and did not meet the school's targets. A thorough, convincing analysis of the reasons has been made. In addition to low standards on entry, school leaders have acknowledged contributory factors such as staffing difficulties, inappropriate teaching and student absence. All these issues have been addressed in preparing current Year 9 students for this year's national tests, for example through: stable, specialist staffing; higher levels of accountability for subject leaders; lessons and additional study sessions that concentrate on specific requirements of the tests. Meetings for parents emphasise the significance of good attendance in achieving high results. Internal assessments show there is some way to go if the school is to meet its targets in 2008, but robust strategies are in place to raise achievement and standards at Key Stage 3. They are well monitored, and aspirations are suitably high among teachers and students alike.

At Key Stage 4 in 2007, there was a substantial increase over the previous year in the proportion of students achieving five or more good GCSE passes, although the figure was much lower if English and mathematics are included. Students made good progress, especially from Key Stage 3, albeit from a low starting-point. An intervention team identifies and monitors individuals and groups where there is any risk of underachievement. The increasing match of the curriculum to individual needs and interests in Key Stage 4, together with more general improvements in teaching and learning, underpin the school's confidence that achievement and standards will continue to rise in Key Stage 4 and that most targets for 2008 are within reach.

Students' attendance has improved. Compared with the previous school year, it has risen from 90.2% to 91.6% in the period from September to February, with the number of persistent absentees reduced from 73 to 52. Attendance has improved across all year groups, although Year 9 attendance remains obstinately just below 90% and is now the focus of the school's efforts. Non-attendance is tackled through a constantly developing range of strategies, supported by the local authority. New procedures have successfully reduced lateness and improved punctuality.

Teachers' effective use of assessment information has been strengthened. Systems for collecting and analysing data and translating the outcomes into targets for groups and individuals have improved. Senior line managers regularly challenge heads of department to show evidence of students' progress. Middle leaders are beginning to produce detailed accounts of strategies used to raise attainment and evaluations of their effectiveness. Revisions to the school's marking policy give greater emphasis to helping students improve rather than merely giving a level or grade, although school leaders know that a consistently thorough approach by all teachers has yet to be achieved. The increasing use of assessment information to support learning techniques means that students have a clearer idea of what is expected of them and

how to achieve it. Students at both key stages feel well supported and are motivated to achieve their best, recognising efforts made by the school on their behalf.

The quality of lesson planning has been the focus of concentrated monitoring by school leaders and is now a major aspect of middle leaders' accountability. Trawls of lesson plans result in useful generic or individual feedback, for example, where differentiation is inadequately defined, or where a good approach to questioning might usefully be shared more widely to develop students' higher thinking skills. Explicit ways of supporting students' literacy needs are apparent in the best planning. These translate into particularly effective teaching where students are encouraged to articulate and develop ideas confidently, write accurately and use appropriate subject terminology with understanding.

The local authority's statement of action following the school being given a notice to improve fulfils the requirements. The headteacher and other staff appreciate the breadth and quality of support given by consultants, advanced skills teachers, and the school improvement partner. The latter provides a regular, well-informed challenge to school leaders and governors in evaluating progress against areas for improvement. Governors have been trained to question rigorously so that they now have good capacity to evaluate the school's continued improvement, for which the foundations are secure. Senior staff have set out clearly what the school needs to do and their lead has been followed enthusiastically. The challenge now is to ensure that responsibility and accountability is exercised consistently at all levels. The headteacher consults fully across the school community; she has its support and confidence in measures taken to improve provision and raise standards. There is an evident eagerness for the school to become good before the academy replaces it.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Bennett
Additional Inspector