

BATH COMMUNITY ACADEMY RESPONDS TO OFSTED CONCERNS

Leaders at Bath Community Academy are taking immediate action after inspectors highlighted concerns over behaviour, exclusions and bullying.

The secondary school, which is part of the Cabot Learning Federation, has stepped up a programme to increase positive student attitudes to learning and is continuing its new behaviour management policy, which has been recognised as effective.

The moves follow the school's second Ofsted visit, which took place in May and resulted in it being judged as inadequate overall. Although this was a disappointing outcome for the academy, which had been rated in 2014 as requiring improvement, it is important to note that the inspectors did not place BCA in special measures because they said leaders were capable of turning things around.

“The academy council and senior leaders of the Cabot Learning Federation have set a fresh course for improved teaching and behaviour that has made progress in some areas but not yet reversed the school's legacy of underachievement,” their report said.

“The current configuration of leadership ... has the knowledge, experience and skills to tackle the school's weaknesses and to secure its future.”

The October 2014 inspection acknowledged the fast rate of improvement at BCA in the two years since it opened on the site of the former Culverhay School. Exam results in 2015 were below Government benchmarks, which led the 2016 team of three HMI inspectors to conclude that pupil outcomes were inadequate, although they recognised that better progress was being made this academic year thanks to improved teaching.

Steve Taylor, chief executive officer at the Cabot Learning Federation, said this summer's GCSE figures were likely to be the best yet for the school, following the introduction of an improved range of courses to meet students' needs.

“The inspectors saw evidence of improvement in teaching, attendance and behaviour, and they noted that there was a generally calm working atmosphere in lessons,” he said.

“We share their concerns over the relatively high number of internal and fixed-term external exclusions and are looking at the best way to ensure learning is not disrupted so that all students can thrive and make progress.”

“We are also taking robust action to remove any uncertainty among students, parents and staff about our ability to tackle bullying. Ensuring better attendance levels overall, and reducing persistent absence, is another of our priorities.”

Ofsted praised a number of aspects of the school's provision, including extra-curricular opportunities and a renewed focus on reading, as well as effective safeguarding arrangements thanks to staff's detailed knowledge of individual pupils' circumstances.

The inspectors said the significant involvement of senior leaders from the federation, especially executive principal Dan Nicholls, and the appointment of interim principal Chris Hall in February following the promotion of founding principal Adam Williams to the top post in another multi-academy trust, was having a strong impact and accelerating the pace of improvements.

Mr Hall said “Staff at BCA are committed to the children and the community we serve. We have a

greater understanding of our role in securing high attainment and strong progress and are rising to the challenge of building on the successes of the Academy. There is a mood of optimistic determination and strong resilience that allows us to accept the findings of the report and to take a good look at the processes that are working well and those that require improvement.”

Ofsted noted that pupil numbers remained low, and were falling. Mr Taylor said that since the academy launched in 2012, additional school places had opened in the area, making it difficult for BCA to recruit enough children to form full year groups. The school currently has 290 students aged 11-16 on roll.

The report said: “[Academy] Council members and senior leaders are working constructively with local partners to restore community faith in the school and to determine the best pathway to high-quality provision for its pupils. There is a will and a determination to reach beyond the federation for expertise and support that will benefit the community.”

NOTE TO EDITORS

Bath Community Academy is one of eight secondary academies in the Cabot Learning Federation, which also includes five primaries and a studio school. It replaced the former Culverhay School, which was a boys' school, with a co-educational provision.

GCSE results, for five A*-C passes including English and maths, went from 18 per cent in 2013 to 38 per cent in 2014. They dipped to 26 per cent in 2015 but are forecast to be 50 per cent in 2016.