

Lightcliffe Academy

Frequently Asked Questions about the Ofsted Inspection Report

1. What process was followed during the inspection and the writing of the report?

Lightcliffe Academy was inspected over 2 days (6-7 November 2018) by a team of 5 inspectors. During this time, they met with senior staff, subject leaders, teachers and governors, they visited 51 lessons, they read the 231 responses to Parent View, and had a number of formal and informal discussions with students.

The report was then written up by the Lead Inspector, quality assured by other Ofsted personnel and finally published on 24th January 2019. The leadership of the academy is very disappointed by the overall judgement of the report and accepts that there are key areas that need rapid improvement. These areas had been identified after exam results last summer, and an action plan was put in place at that stage. The Lead Inspector recognised that the academy was already responding to the main issues but was clear that by the time of his visit, in November, there was not enough evidence of impact for his judgement to be different.

There were a number of positives within the report about the academy:

- The number of pupils on the school roll is increasing. The majority of parents who completed Parent View would recommend the school.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Leaders deal with individual cases of bullying effectively. Pupils say that bullying is rare.
- Leaders, with the support of the trust, have managed to improve pupils' attitudes to their learning since the previous inspection.
- In mathematics, some teachers' strong subject knowledge and understanding of examination specifications are helping pupils to develop their mathematical fluency and resilience at a swifter rate than in the past.
- Some subjects, such as English and science, have revised their curriculum to meet the needs of pupils.
- Stronger teaching and more stable staffing are beginning to improve pupils' progress in science this academic year.
- Leaders have been successful in redesigning the five PSHE 'drop-down' days so that pupils learn a broader set of skills and gain a more detailed understanding of life in modern Britain.
- Pupils attend a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Staff lead additional sessions that successfully develop pupils' creative and musical skills, physical attributes and mental health and awareness.
- The proportion of pupils who progress to post-16 provision in school or elsewhere is high.
- Students say that the support they receive with their university applications and advice towards their next steps are valuable. Just less than 60% of students went on to study courses at university or further education in 2018
- The school brokers external support to ensure that all Year 12 students can benefit from taking part in work experience. Furthermore, a varied enrichment programme allows students to develop their leadership skills, complete projects and gain early experience of life at university.

Given the number of positives, and other verbal comments made during the inspection, we think that the report has been overly harsh in its overall judgement of where the academy is at. We have challenged the report in certain areas but no major changes have been made by Ofsted.

2. What steps and actions are going to be put in place to ensure that the academy improves for its current students?

The inspectors identified some key issues that the academy needs to improve:

- Student progress (KS3, 4 and 5)
- Attendance
- Disadvantaged students – progress and attendance
- Consistency of staff applying academy policies
- Consistency of leadership (at all levels)
- Variability of teaching and learning, especially lack of challenge in lessons
- Low levels of literacy for some students
- Low level disruption

The academy has written an action plan which clearly responds to these issues, and is broken down into 5 areas:

Leadership and Management

Aim: to ensure that leadership at all levels is strong; to ensure a challenging KS3 curriculum; and to ensure that all staff apply policies consistently.

Method: change at senior level with experienced headteacher from a very successful MAT school, and 2 new Vice Principals to lead on the action plans. Regular monitoring of plans by external experienced school leader, as well as Trust Board and MAT Central Team.

Programme of tailored training for staff, and monitoring of key aspects of teaching and learning through lesson observation and work scrutiny

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Aim: to ensure that teachers use prior assessment when planning lessons; to teach lessons that challenge all students; to promote literacy across the curriculum; and to improve student progress.

Method: introduction of challenging learning objectives to all lessons, as well as revisiting prior learning every lesson to aid students with recalling content, particularly at GCSE and A-level. Coordination of intervention activities for students who are below the required progress standards

Behaviour for Learning

Aim: to reduce disruptive behaviour; to encourage students to take a pride in their work; and to ensure that students' attitudes to learning are good

Method: clarity of how low-level disruption is dealt with in the classroom – use of the Level System. Regular PRIDE checks of students' work. Monitoring of the consistency of staff in applying the behaviour policy

Attendance

Aim: to improve overall attendance; and to reduce persistent absence

Method: introduction of a system which celebrates good attendance and sets a clear set of interventions for students for whom attendance is less than good.

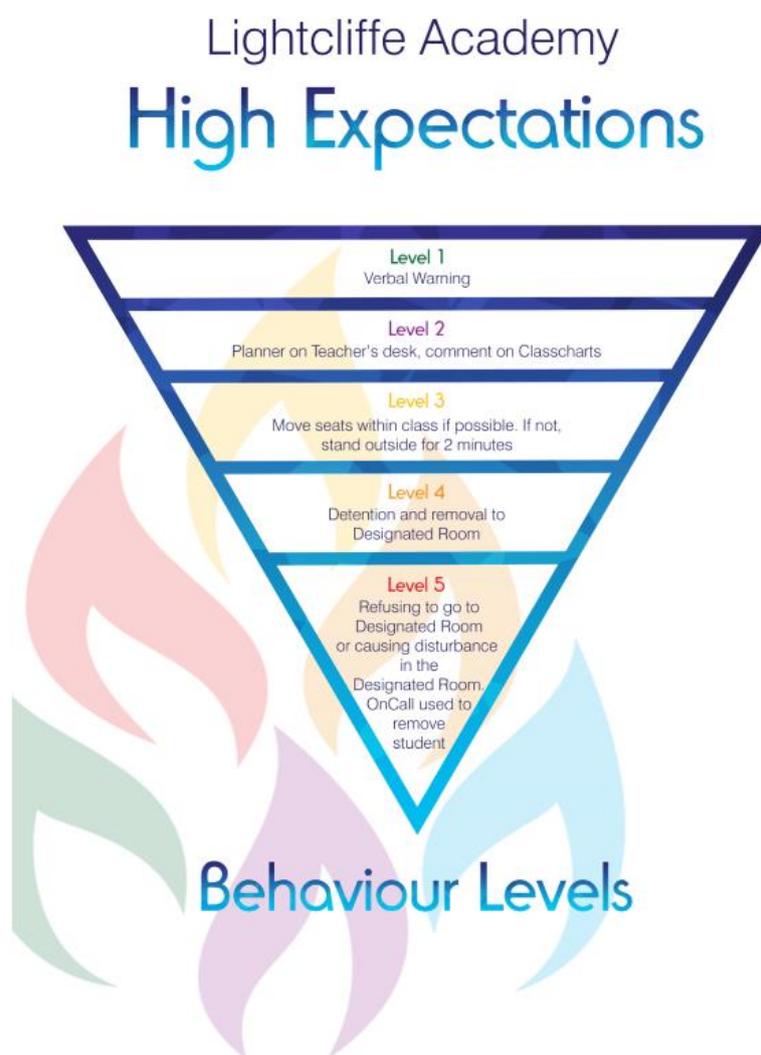
Sixth Form:

Aim: to ensure that students are challenged; and to improve student progress

Method: action plans at department level where students are not forecast to perform as well as they should. Challenge in all lessons to push students to achieve what they are capable of.

3. How does the behaviour system work and how can disruptive behaviour be reduced?

Students are rewarded for good behaviour, by being given positive comments on Class Charts. When students behave in ways which are disruptive to learning, teachers use this system of levelled consequences:



These levels are intended to ensure that students are dealt with consistently from classroom to classroom, and have the opportunity to modify their behaviour before things escalate to the more serious sanctions. Negative comments are also recorded on Class Charts.

The Ofsted Report says that there are 43 disruptions to learning a day. What this actually means is that in 1 in 8 lessons per day, a student is getting to Level 2 of the Behaviour Chart. For us this shows that the Behaviour policy is being used correctly and, in most cases, puts an end to the low level disruption. This figure is less than a school rated "Good" by Ofsted in the MAT.

4. Why was student progress poor last year and what has been done to improve forecasting?

Although there were good examples of challenge in lessons, and appropriately planned lessons, this was not consistent across the academy. Some students' low attendance also hampered their ability to do well, and the focus on the progress of disadvantaged students was not as strong as it should have been.

Teachers' ability to forecast with accuracy last summer was made harder by the fact that most subjects at GCSE had just been reformed, and therefore teachers did not know what the standards for each new grade were. During this year, internal assessment has used the new exam papers, as well as the grade boundaries from the summer, with department moderating the marking of colleagues. Forecast grades have not been allowed to be more than 1 grade higher than mock exam performance, unless in exceptional circumstances.

5. How are we preparing students for exams this year so that they perform better?

We have appointed Mr Clarke to overview Year 11 in his role as Achievement Director, and has worked with Mr Harwood (Vice Principal) to produce a Year 11 Raising Achievement Plan. This includes specific actions, including 2 sets of mock exams to best prepare students for the summer, focused activities for students not on target, a breakfast club for all Year 11 students every day before school to help with revision, after school and holiday sessions put on by subject teachers, mentoring for selected students, etc.

Current forecast data shows that Year 11 students will do significantly better this summer. The next set of mocks, in February, will give an even better idea of where students are at, allowing time for further intervention.

6. What happens next and how long until the next review?

We will submit our action plan to Ofsted and be appointed an HMI inspector who will carry out regular monitoring visits to assess whether we are making satisfactory progress. These monitoring visits will have a short, written report that we will send out to all parents and carers. We will also feed back regularly to parents on progress made against the Action Plan. Ultimately there will be another full (2 day) inspection in which we hope to prove that we are no longer inadequate. We do not yet know when the first monitoring visit will be.

7. What is being done to improve the sixth form?

As has already been said, in the action plan there is a specific focus on sixth form provision. In terms of teaching and learning, the same emphasis on challenge in all lessons is expected

of teachers. The progress of students in sixth form is tracked regularly, and departments are asked to produce plans at each tracking point in order to target students who are falling behind. This is now the subject of regular line management meetings to ensure that actions take place and are evaluated regularly. Students will also be mentored according to needs identified by their progress tracking, including help with study skills and response to poor attendance.

8. Why does my child have supply teachers in some of his classes?

Our aim is always to have permanent subject-specialists teaching our students, but this is not always possible. Currently we have staff on maternity leave and absent through ill health for whom we have had to get in temporary replacements. We will always look to get specialists in as a replacement but have to go with what is available. Recruitment is an issue nationally, as you may have seen in the news, and there are shortages in some core subjects. Where we can, we will re-do timetables to avoid the same classes taking the hit of not having a permanent teacher.

9. What is the role of Abbey Trust, and does it have the capacity to help Lightcliffe to improve?

The Trust Board is very disappointed by the outcomes of the inspection, and surprised at some of the observations in the report - they don't reflect many of the positive things that are going on at Lightcliffe. However, it does recognise that there are some major issues that need to be resolved.

The Board is very committed to doing as much as it can to support the leadership team and staff to address the key issues identified in the report and build on the progress made over recent years. It has already taken steps to strengthen leadership in the academy, and there is more capacity coming into the school from the central education team; it will follow up the recommendations for an external review of governance and in the meantime strengthen the oversight it has over the school.

The Board takes its accountability very seriously, and is looking closely at its own systems and practice to learn what lessons it can from this. The directors still believe Abbey Trust is the best partnership for Lightcliffe, and want to move forward positively over the months ahead, working closely with parents and staff to ensure that students are fully supported and challenged to achieve the best outcomes possible for them.

The Trust Board will work to further develop the local governing body of Lightcliffe to ensure that governors hold the leadership team to account, and are effective in their role of being critical friends of the academy. The Central Education Team, in particular the Director of Education and the Head of Effectiveness, will continue to meet regularly with the leadership team of Lightcliffe to ensure that the action plan is being monitored and is leading to impact. The Trust Board has also sourced an experienced education professional to help in this task, spending 1 day per week at Lightcliffe, with a focus on the action plan.

10. What can parents do to support?

Support our push for attendance - we want all of our students to have 96% or better because research shows that this is their best chance of achieving their targets. Talking to your children about positive and negative points on ClassCharts will help to reinforce our behaviour system. Please monitor homework, equipment, uniform and punctuality – if our

students are in school on time, with the right equipment and prepared for their lessons, they are likely to have positive experiences and not get into trouble. You can also have learning conversations with your children: What can they do? Do they know how to improve? Also encourage them to read, and ask them questions to check their understanding. Communication with us is always useful, especially when there is an issue at home which might affect them at school. We also have a Parents' Forum which meets regularly, and welcomes new members.