

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



10 December 2015

Mr S. Cameron
Headteacher
Hallmoor School
Scholars Gate
Kitts Green
Birmingham
B33 0DL

Dear Mr Cameron

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hallmoor School

Following my visit with Simon Mosley, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 1–2 December 2015, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2015. 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint up to two newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2015

- Take urgent and effective action to:
 - complete the single central record
 - ensure that all necessary checks of all staff and relevant adults have been completed and recorded to the required standard
 - remedy the weaknesses in child protection procedures and ensure that actions taken are fully recorded
 - fully record all incidents of physical intervention and analyse these to see if there are any patterns and trends in order to take any necessary action
 - develop pupils' independence in moving around the school, ensuring that they are not moved by adults unless this is strictly necessary
 - reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent for reasons other than genuine medical conditions.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - improving leaders' and governors' knowledge and understanding of safeguarding requirements and good practice in keeping children safe
 - clarifying each leader's roles and responsibilities, and holding them to account for the impact of their work
 - ensuring that leaders gain an accurate understanding of all aspects of the school's work, and raising their expectations of themselves and others
 - developing a system to accurately assess pupils' progress in all key stages, particularly in Key Stages 4 and 5 and the complex needs classes
 - using this assessment information alongside pupils' work and direct observations of learning to evaluate the quality of teaching over time
 - urgently reviewing all aspects of provision and outcomes in the complex needs classes
 - planning a coherent curriculum in all subjects, prioritising reading, writing and mathematics, for all key stages.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, and thereby pupils' achievement, by:
 - ensuring that assessment in lessons and over time is accurate
 - using this assessment information to plan tasks in each lesson that are suitable for pupils' needs and build on their skills, knowledge and understanding
 - maximising the role of teaching assistants to promote pupils' independence and help them to make progress
 - ensuring that resources are suitable for pupils' ages and needs.

An external review of governance, including a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 1–2 December 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, groups of staff and the Chair and a member of the Interim Executive Board (IEB). Conversations were held with representatives from the local authority. Inspectors looked closely at the school's information about safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, bullying, and teaching and learning. They spoke to pupils informally throughout the two days.

Context

The school moved to a new building in September, very close to the original site. The governing body has been replaced by an IEB. Since the previous inspection, one senior leader, two teachers and four support staff have left the school and five support staff have joined. Six teachers were absent through ill health during the inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

Many Key Stage 4 and 5 pupils were entered for and passed a range of entry level qualifications in the summer of 2015, including in English and mathematics. The school does not have clear information about the progress the pupils made over the last year or the key stage, so it is not possible to tell whether the accreditation gained was appropriate or represented positive achievement. There are, however, discrepancies in attainment in different subjects, for example outcomes in art are weaker than those in English and mathematics.

The school does not have an overview of how well younger pupils are progressing in different subjects either. However, visits to lessons and the work seen in pupils' books and folders indicates that for many pupils of all ages, better teaching is now helping them to make better progress in English and in mathematics over time than they have done previously. Work is well presented and shows that pupils are taking a pride in their learning.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is beginning to improve. This is helping to ensure that the work pupils are being asked to do is at the right level for them and is also suitably challenging. Importantly, leaders and teachers have moderated their assessments in English and mathematics with a range of other schools.

The school has been focusing on improving the effectiveness with which teachers match the work to the needs of different pupils in each lesson. The impact of this development was seen in many of the lessons visited. Teachers had almost always thought carefully about what they wanted the different groups of pupils to achieve in the lesson, and matched the tasks to these desired outcomes. For example, in one lesson pupils were learning about volume. Activities for different pupils ranged from pouring water from one jug to another to understand the concepts of 'empty' and 'full' to learning how to measure in millilitres and litres. This careful approach was common in almost all the lessons visited and helped pupils to make progress.

Leaders also expect teachers to check the learning of the pupils who are working with teaching assistants more frequently than they have done in the past. This aspect is improving to some extent, although too many teachers still do not check pupils' work quickly enough. When the strategy works best, teachers check near to the start of the task that all staff have understood what they have to do with their pupils, so that they do not set off on the wrong track. Teachers then go back and ask searching questions of the pupils part way through the lesson, to check their learning. Where teachers did this well in the lessons visited, they quickly noticed if pupils had not understood and so were able to correct misconceptions or adapt the task as needed.

A number of visits were made to English and mathematics lessons. These visits and the work in pupils' books indicated that teachers are currently more confident and skilful in teaching English than mathematics.

In English, most of the teaching seen was well planned to meet the needs of the pupils in the class. Pupils' books and other work suggest that this is typical. Tasks were often based on real-life situations, which added to pupils' interest and engagement. For example, in one lesson, pupils were using photographs to write an account of an event in different forms, including a diary entry and a newspaper article. Books were marked using the school's marking policy – all gave positive comments and most provided clear steps to help pupils to improve their work.

In mathematics lessons, teachers had almost always planned interesting, relevant work and given careful thought to resources. However, many did not question pupils well about their learning, so came to wrong conclusions about how well pupils had understood. There is not enough planning for how pupils will demonstrate whether they can carry out their new skills in a range of different situations and there is no calculation policy to define how calculation should be taught. This leads to a lack of consistency in the methods used from class to class. The leader of mathematics has a good understanding of all these aspects and how they can be improved. Senior leaders are aware of the need to prioritise mathematics training and development for staff.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Throughout the inspection, pupils were pleasant and polite to each other and to staff, and were welcoming to visitors. In lessons, almost every pupil showed positive attitudes to learning and they were keen to do well. Where teaching was enthusiastic, pupils responded accordingly, showing good levels of interest in their work. The school's records and pupils' and staff's views indicate that the behaviour seen during the inspection is typical. Even where the work was challenging, many pupils were persistent. Sixth formers were mature and sensible when talking about sexual relationships in a personal, social, health and economic education lesson, and conducted themselves very well around the school. Occasionally, low-level disruption in lessons was not challenged well enough by staff.

Pupils are very pleased with their new school building. They treat it with great care. The bright and informative displays of pupils' work are untouched and everywhere is kept neat and tidy. Pupils move around the school sensibly. There are still some instances where pupils are not given enough opportunities to be independent, for example the sixth form are expected to line up after lunch before coming back into school.

Lunchtimes are orderly and well supervised but do not contribute well enough to developing pupils' personal and social skills. All pupils have their lunchbreak at the same time but the dining room is small, so pupils are expected to eat quite quickly then go outside so others can come in. Staff do not sit with them to help them to develop good eating and conversational skills. Leaders are aware that there is not much for older pupils to do in the playground and are planning to order new activities and equipment when the budget allows. The start to the school day is well organised and safe, but some pupils have to sit on their buses for quite a long time when they arrive early. Leaders plan to review this issue to see if the time can be used more constructively.

Overall attendance is around 92%, which is similar to last term. While still below the national average, the initial improvements that were made in the spring term have been maintained. Fifty-three percent of pupils are now attending for 95% of the time or more, which is a slight improvement. The school is being more analytical about the reasons why pupils do not attend and the actions they are taking are having some positive impact on the attendance of individuals.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher, with the support of senior leaders and staff, has successfully managed the move into the new building. Pupils are settled and happy in their new environment, routines are clear and the school is running smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Parents and carers were invited to tour the school site before September to allay any concerns. These tours were well attended. Initial concerns among some of

the local community, for example about minibuses coming too fast down a residential road, have been successfully remedied.

A series of lesson observations has enabled senior leaders to be confident about where the best teaching lies and where there are weaknesses. Action has been taken to begin to eradicate the weakest teaching and this is beginning to have an impact. The process of agreeing on the 'Hallmoor Commitments', which set out which elements should be present in each lesson, has been useful in clarifying for staff what is expected and why. Having gained this overview, senior leaders understand the importance of re-focusing the time they spend in classrooms so that it aligns with the school's priorities, such as improvement in the teaching of mathematics.

A new performance management system has been introduced both for teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers, particularly those with management responsibilities, have had their roles clarified. Teaching assistants have been given clearer responsibilities for aspects of the school's work, such as supporting the special educational needs coordinator or being in charge of displays or resources. Some aspects of leaders' responsibilities are not clear enough.

Careful thought has been given to introducing a more appropriate curriculum and more suitable accreditation for Key Stages 4 and 5. GCSE examination groups have been introduced for the first time, for pupils for whom this route is appropriate. The school recently held a useful advice and information event for Key Stage 5 learners and their parents, which was very well received.

The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum has undergone radical changes. Pupils are now studying crucial topics at a much more appropriate point in their education. Great emphasis is placed on helping them to keep themselves safe within friendships and relationships. This was demonstrated very well in a sixth form lesson in which learners reflected on the meaning of consent and the difference between positive and abusive relationships.

Staff have received thorough information about how to keep pupils safe. They have attended relevant safeguarding training and they know how to act if they have concerns about a young person's welfare. They know how to reduce risks and are clear about what they should do if a student made a disclosure to them.

Leaders and staff have worked hard to improve the school's engagement with parents and carers. Staff are making telephone calls and sending texts home to report on positive behaviour, attendance improvements or progress in lessons. Two courses have been run for parents and carers, one for upper school and one for lower school. These covered a range of relevant issues and the feedback from families was very positive. Leaders have responded to parents' and carers' concerns

about how to talk to their children about sex and relationships and have arranged a course on this topic for the start of next year.

Leaders are not collating the information about the progress pupils are making over time in a systematic way. This means that they do not know enough about how well pupils are progressing in different subjects or different classes. Leaders recognise that this aspect of their work requires urgent attention.

The new IEB is well organised. Members have clearly defined responsibilities and their initial visits to the school have had a clear and useful focus. Meetings follow the local authority monitoring group meetings, so that any necessary actions can be put into place.

External support

The local authority's new arrangements for monitoring the school are at an early stage of development. There has been some lack of clarity this term about the roles of the different people involved. However, the monitoring group meetings have been well focused and the IEB have found them useful in informing their work.

Useful support has been received from the local authority for human resources and safeguarding issues.

The headteacher has continued to actively seek support from other schools both within and outside the local area. This has been particularly valuable in supporting the development of the PSHE curriculum.