

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



14 December 2015

Mrs Karen Horne
Principal
Mansfield Green E-ACT Academy
Albert Road
Aston
Birmingham
B6 5NH

Dear Mrs Horne

Special measures monitoring inspection of Mansfield Green E-ACT Academy

Following my visit with Justine Lomas, Ofsted Inspector to your academy on 1 and 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2014. 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.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham City Council.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2014

- Improve the impact of leaders and managers on pupils' achievement by:
 - establishing, as a matter of urgency, leadership structures that ensure the academy has strong and stable senior leadership and governance
 - setting performance targets that reflect high expectations for pupils' achievement and require all teachers to meet the government's Teachers' Standards
 - providing training to help teachers meet the Teachers' Standards
 - ensuring senior leaders frequently check the quality of teaching and hold teachers rigorously to account for its impact on pupils' achievement
 - enabling other leaders to contribute effectively to improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

- Improve the quality of teaching by making sure teachers:
 - know what standards pupils should be working at for their age and expect pupils to achieve these
 - have a detailed understanding of what pupils can do and what skills each pupil needs to do next
 - plan lessons that focus on teaching the skills pupils need to develop, rather than merely completing a task
 - make good use of teaching assistants' time so that they consistently support pupils to make good progress
 - use questions to probe pupils' understanding or to challenge them in their thinking
 - check how well pupils are learning in lessons and modify the lesson accordingly to ensure progress is swift
 - give quality feedback in lessons and when marking pupils' work, to help address pupils' misunderstandings and help them improve further.

- Ensure pupils achieve well in reading, writing, spoken communication and mathematics, so they can succeed in the next stage of their education by:
 - identifying accurately gaps in pupils' knowledge in phonics, mathematics and writing skills
 - building pupils' phonic knowledge systematically and swiftly across Years 1 and 2
 - helping pupils to understand and enjoy many different types of books
 - providing structured opportunities for pupils to learn how to communicate confidently and clearly using spoken language
 - ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants model high quality spoken and

- written English to pupils at all times
 - giving pupils plenty of opportunities to practise and apply writing skills in English lessons and in different subjects
 - helping pupils to master mathematical understanding by applying their knowledge about numbers to different situations in mathematics lessons and in other subjects.
- Ensure disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well by ensuring that:
- pupils' needs are identified accurately
 - teachers understand pupils' needs and use appropriate strategies to support them in lessons
 - additional support given through small group or individual teaching helps pupils overcome their difficulties and does not merely focus on repeating work they have already struggled with.

An external review of governance and an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 December 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and vice-principal, the early years leader, a group of pupils and the Chief Executive Officer of E-ACT, the academy's sponsor, who is also a member of the interim governing body.

As improvements in provision and outcomes for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs were a focus of the previous monitoring inspection, this area for improvement was not looked at in depth on this inspection.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, there have been changes to staffing at all levels. Several teachers, teaching assistants, office staff and the caretaker either took retirement or resigned their posts. A number of teaching posts are currently covered by agency or supply staff because of vacancies and long-term sickness absence. Three experienced teachers have been recruited to middle leadership posts and are due to start at Mansfield Green in January 2016. They are to take part in an induction programme before they take up post.

Since the last monitoring inspection, the affiliation with Nechells Academy has come to an end. The shared governing body has been replaced by an interim board for Mansfield Green composed of senior staff from E-ACT, pending a decision by the trustees as to how governance will be organised in the future. This decision is expected shortly. The executive headteacher no longer works formally with Mansfield Green. The academy is now working closely with another Birmingham primary school in the E-ACT academy trust, Merritts Brook Academy. This academy's effectiveness was judged to be good at its recent inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

Standards are continuing to rise across the academy, from a low baseline. The academy's assessments show that some groups of pupils and some year groups are making progress at a good rate and that the proportions reaching the expectations for their age are increasing. On the other hand, there are some year groups or classes who are not making the good progress that the academy expects in some or all of reading, writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling, and mathematics. This largely reflects changes of teacher and weaker teaching.

The results of the national tests and assessments taken in the summer term 2015, as yet unvalidated, also give a mixed picture. There are some encouraging signs.

There was a small improvement in the proportion of children who reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year, but the overall figure does not match the provisional figures for children nationally and in Birmingham. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check also improved, and the gap on the national figure narrowed. There was a similar slight improvement in outcomes at the end of Year 2. It is particularly encouraging that more Year 2 pupils gained higher levels than in previous years. Nevertheless, all of these results were below, or well below, those of pupils nationally.

At Year 6, the academy's results were below the government's expected minimum standards for attainment and progress, and did not improve on the results from 2014. These disappointing results do not tell the whole story, however. The academy made every effort to boost the attainment and progress of that cohort of pupils. Taking the time that the academy was placed in special measures as a starting point, pupils in Year 6 last year made progress at a good rate and, overall, closed the gap considerably on where they should have been. Some pupils made excellent progress in a short space of time. Disadvantaged pupils made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics during their time in Year 6. Pupils who were disabled or who had special educational needs made good progress in writing and mathematics, and expected progress in reading. However, this accelerated progress was not enough to compensate fully for their underachievement in previous years.

Observations in lessons during this inspection and samples of pupils' work confirm that many pupils are making at least the progress that is expected of them. Making sure that all groups of pupils in all year groups make the best possible progress is now a key priority for the academy. Several things are being done to try to make sure this happens. Senior staff and teachers meet regularly to review assessment information and to decide on what steps to take for individuals and groups of pupils. Half an hour each morning is devoted to 'maths meeting' time, where pupils work on basic skills such as number bonds or times tables, to strengthen their underpinning knowledge and swift recall. Similarly, time is devoted every day to grammar, punctuation and spelling. Expectations have been raised and the presentation of work in pupils' books is greatly improved.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The academy's monitoring records show that, despite the turnover of staff, the quality of teaching continues to improve. Evidence that the academy collects from observations in lessons, learning walks, pupils' work in their books and records of their attainment and progress confirm that there is a growing core of solidly good teaching, and that inadequate teaching has largely been dealt with.

The academy's approaches to the teaching of writing and mathematics are becoming firmly established and there is greater consistency across all year groups.

Observations during this inspection showed that teachers are clearly growing in confidence, knowledge and skill. They understand what is expected of them and are working hard to plan and teach their lessons in accordance with the academy's policies. Teachers have a much better knowledge of the prior attainment of their pupils and check what pupils know already before beginning a new topic. As a result, they are able to match tasks and activities more closely to pupils' needs. Because teachers are more confident in their subject knowledge, they are quicker to spot where pupils are struggling and to know what to do next to support them. Teachers place a much greater emphasis now on making sure that pupils understand their work, speak clearly when addressing the whole class, use adventurous and technical vocabulary appropriately and explain their reasoning. There is less focus on making sure that pupils complete a task, and more on checking that they have grasped the concepts behind it.

There is still a way to go before the academy's leaders can be sure that all teachers can be relied upon to teach all subjects well. During this inspection, for example, guided reading sessions in Key Stage 1 were not organised well enough to make sure that all pupils were doing activities that actually required them to read, or that the texts pupils did read were well matched to their reading ability.

Pupils are excited and delighted by the academy's new library area and are keen to get in there and read. This is an ideal opportunity to raise the profile of reading still further across the academy. Book areas in classrooms are nowhere near as inviting as the new library: they should be.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The academy's records of 'good news' and 'bad news' events show that there are relatively few incidents of poor behaviour. The academy has expanded this system and, as well as earning marks for behaviour, pupils can now gain a 'gold card' for effort or achievement. This means that doing good work is seen as important as behaving well. During this inspection, pupils waited proudly at the end of the day, some with pieces of work, to collect their certificate and sticker from the Principal.

As noted at previous monitoring inspections, pupils behaved well in lessons and showed interest and application to their work. At break and lunchtimes, they played and socialised well with one another.

A group of pupils thoroughly enjoyed talking to an inspector about their school and showing her the work in their books. In lessons, too, pupils were happy to share what they were doing.

The academy has continued to keep staff updated on matters relating to safeguarding. All staff had 'Prevent' training at the end of the summer term. Training for the designated safeguarding leads has been updated as necessary. The

Principal's weekly newsletter to staff highlights particular safeguarding issues. All staff must read required documents such as *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and the fact that they have done so is recorded on the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, in line with the trust's policy. The academy observed a period of silence for the victims of the attacks in Paris. Thought was given as to how to deal with any questions that pupils might raise.

Staff continue to strive to improve attendance and to work with families to reduce the number of pupils who are away from school too often. A tougher stance is now being taken to deal with persistent absence and efforts with individuals are well documented. This term, absence for a religious festival has had an adverse impact on the academy's figures. There is, as yet, no sign of sustained improvement in attendance figures.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

The Principal and other senior staff are taking a well-judged approach to driving forward improvements. The plan for improvement shows that they are not trying to do too much at once, but they are also keenly aware of the urgency that is needed. To that end, they make sure that what is done is done well and becomes part of expected practice as quickly as possible. The responsibility for leading some of the changes, such as to the teaching of writing and mathematics, is devolved to 'change teams' who take the lead in new developments. Senior leaders follow up and check that staff have listened and learned and are applying the academy's policies in the classroom. This is supplemented by a weekly letter from the Principal to all staff that contains timely reminders and the outcomes of the various monitoring activities. This all makes sure that there is no reason for staff not to know what is expected of them. A culture of high expectations and ambition for the pupils is becoming more evident.

Vacancies at middle leader level mean that senior staff still carry a number of responsibilities. The three recently appointed middle leaders will each assume oversight of two year groups and will take on wider responsibilities. The provision of induction before they take up post should help to make sure they get off to a good start. These appointments should further strengthen and broaden leadership and as such are much-needed.

Arrangements for the performance management of staff have been reinstated, and include support staff as well as teaching staff. All staff have targets that relate to better outcomes for pupils and that are readily measurable. In addition, professional development activities for staff are related not only to whole-academy initiatives, but to aspects of the teachers' standards for individual members of staff.

The partnership arrangements with Merritts Brook Academy are working well. The Principal and staff at Merritts Brook offer support as needed, and understand the

challenges that Mansfield Green faces as they have been on a similar journey themselves. However, the system leader from Merritts Brook is the third person in less than a year to be asked to mentor, support and challenge the Principal at Mansfield Green. Any further changes should only happen in exceptional circumstances.

The interim governing body comprises members of the previous governing body and so the temporary arrangements do not mean that there is a loss of continuity. The governing body members also form part of the 'raising attainment board' (RAB) that conducts reviews of how well the academy is progressing. The reviews have recently changed to include visits to classrooms. This is a sensible step and allows the RAB's members to triangulate the information they have been given with what they see in classrooms.

Mansfield Green has now been in special measures for one year. Two things will be crucial for further improvement and the removal of special measures. First, the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers and support staff to replace temporary and agency staff as they leave. This will be an important step towards the second priority, which is to eradicate inconsistencies in progress between different classes and groups of pupils and make sure that everyone makes good progress over time.

External support

E-ACT has continued to provide good support for the academy which has helped with some of the improvements noted above. In particular, the partnership arrangements put in place with Merritts Brook Academy have helped with both the driving forward of improvements at Mansfield Green and the recruitment of experienced teachers. The reviews carried out by the RAB mean that E-ACT has a good understanding of where things are going well and what is being done to deal with weaknesses. E-ACT also gives the Principal the scope to find support from external sources where it is not immediately available in-house. The support that the Principal has arranged, for example for developments in mathematics, has been effective.