

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



22 December 2015

Mrs Lesley Brennan
Principal
Kingsmoor Academy
Ployters Road
Harlow
CM18 7PS

Dear Mrs Brennan

Requires improvement: second monitoring inspection visit to Kingsmoor Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 4 December 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the section 5 inspection in order to become a good academy. The academy should take further action to:

- make sure that teachers have higher expectations of pupils' behaviour and that they ensure that pupils listen to each other well and work quietly when necessary to complete their work.

Evidence

During the inspection I met with you and we visited all of the classrooms together. I talked to pupils informally and looked at the work in their books. I met with a consultant, who works part time at the academy, and a representative of the Academy Transformation Trust (ATT). I also met with the three assistant principals, a group of pupils and two members of the governing body. I scrutinised safeguarding records and I looked at documents including academy achievement information and monitoring records.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection two teachers have left and four have joined the academy. The Chair of the Governing Body has left and the vice-chair has stepped up to become the chair. Five governors have left and six have joined the governing body. You joined the academy in September 2015, following the departure of the previous principal. A consultant works at the academy on one day per week to help improve teaching and learning in mathematics. Two teachers were absent during the inspection and the deputy headteacher is on maternity leave.

Main findings

Since you arrived at the academy you have injected drive, vigour and urgency into school improvement. You have reorganised the leadership structure and appointed two new assistant principals to support you in improving teaching and learning. Currently these new leaders are covering staff absence but they have already had an impact more widely. They have helped you to introduce the expectation that all lessons will include differentiated learning targets called 'must, could and should' statements. These help pupils to understand what they are going to learn. They also help teachers to plan lessons that are challenging. However, some teachers do not yet use this system to best effect. Some of the targets do not get progressively more difficult and, therefore, they fail to provide challenge, particularly for the most-able pupils.

You have sensibly continued with some of the existing systems and procedures that are working well. For instance, the previous Principal introduced a comprehensive programme to monitor and improve teaching and learning. This ensures that senior leaders have detailed information about the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers have regular feedback and targets to improve their teaching. You also identify areas of good practice to share across the academy.

Pupils value the house-token system to reward good behaviour and work. You have continued to invite 'always pupils', those who always behave well, to 'come dine with me' lunches. This gives you good opportunities to talk to pupils about their work and to hear their views about their lessons and the academy. You believe that behaviour has improved and the findings of the trust's recent review of the academy confirm this. However, during my visit, it was clear that positive behaviour for learning is not embedded across the academy. Pupils were certainly excited about some of their work but they did not always listen to each other as well as they could, and in some of the classes they did not work hard to complete tasks quickly or with industry. Some of the classrooms were unnecessarily noisy.

You have identified appropriate priorities for further improvement. Leaders have worked with a consultant to review the calculation policy in mathematics, because they recognised that teachers do always teach calculation skills consistently or always use the correct mathematical vocabulary.

You and your leadership team have introduced whole-academy systems and expectations. For instance, all classes display a model sentence for their unit of work in English. This shows pupils the features of a sentence that they are working to develop in their own writing. This is helpful because it ensures that pupils learn a progression of writing skills as sentences become increasingly more complex across the year and from one year group to another.

You have introduced 'wow' days because you recognised that the curriculum was failing to inspire and excite pupils, and you put great store in making learning fun. 'Wow' days have included a visit to a local supermarket bakery as part of some work in design technology. Pupils in Year 2 dressed up for a 'Victorian Day'. Pupils say they enjoy these learning opportunities and they produce some good pieces of writing and other work as a result. You have also raised expectations for displays of pupils' work and for working walls which are helpful aids to teaching and learning.

Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics improved in the summer assessments. However, there is still a long way to go. Some of the pupils in Year 6 are still catching up on learning skills and concepts they should have learned in other years. You want to ensure that pupils make good progress in each of their subjects and in every year group. You have introduced a new system to assess and track pupils' progress. You have made sure that teachers' assessments are more accurate than previously by providing training for all where they compare their assessments with those of other teachers.

The governors see their role as critical friends and they are becoming more effective at holding you and other senior leaders to account. They are organised into four teams to cover different aspects of the academy's work, and have become more focused in their monitoring and challenge. They visit the academy regularly to see things first-hand.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

You draw on the support of the academy trust. The trust provides a part-time consultant. A representative visits the academy fortnightly to support and challenge you. Other senior leaders have had training for new approaches to assessment without levels. The trust and members of the governing body have also been flexible and recognised that you needed to recruit staff quickly. They agreed to the temporary overstaffing of the academy to cover staff absence and to plan for the imminent expansion to two forms of entry. You have managed to recruit teachers and leaders with experience of school improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector