

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



8 January 2016

Mrs Cathy Carlisle
Headteacher
Alderman Jacobs School
Drybread Road
Whittlesey
Peterborough
PE7 1XJ

Dear Mrs Carlisle

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Alderman Jacobs School

Following my visit to your school on 11 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, and the Chair of the Academy Trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement priority plan was evaluated. Lesson observations and a scrutiny of books in class were undertaken to gauge the quality of teaching and learning. I also checked the procedures for recruiting and vetting staff, and also the systems for managing staff performance.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection there have been some significant staff changes. A new leader of the early years has been appointed and also a new leader responsible for the quality of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. You also have four newly qualified teachers who started at the beginning of this academic year.

Main findings

Actions have been taken swiftly, and the academy is now moving on at pace. You have quickly put plans in place to tackle the areas identified at the inspection. You consider that there are now no barriers to the academy moving forward and becoming good at the next inspection. Since the inspection, you have strengthened leadership capacity by appointing a new early years leader and a leader for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Everyone has sharpened their focus on improving teaching and learning – including governors.

The areas that you have identified are the right ones to move the academy forward. You have wasted no time in monitoring and evaluating the impact of your work in improving behaviour. In lessons, pupils are more engaged in their learning. Your work to improve behaviour through introducing a clear reward scheme is having a positive effect. During this monitoring inspection, no word of reprimand was seen or needed. Lessons flowed easily and active learning is now a feature. Parents have noticed the changes and this is reflected in the more positive views expressed within the online questionnaire.

You have also worked hard on improving attendance at the academy through the introduction of many positive strategies. Pupils are rewarded for full and improved attendance. Actions are being taken to tackle persistent absenteeism through a combination of support and challenge. As a result, absenteeism is reducing and attendance is already at national expectations for this academic year.

Leaders and governors have robustly addressed the issue of policies within the academy and these are now part of a regular review cycle and updated in line with statutory requirements. Adults follow the policies well within the school day. For example, the academy's feedback and marking policy is used more consistently. Pupils understand what they need to do and respond well, when required, to the feedback given from their teacher.

You have rightly prioritised training and development of staff, including teaching assistants. External training is already underway to enhance the subject knowledge of all staff, particularly in spelling and grammar, so they can better support pupils. The English subject leader is delivering effective weekly training sessions with support staff so that they too can have greater impact on accelerating the progress that pupils make in spelling and grammar.

Your middle leaders have taken on their roles and responsibilities effectively. They use the time you allow for checking on the quality of teaching across the academy very effectively. Consequently, these middle leaders now have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within their subjects. They are taking action to improve standards and are already seeing the positive impact of their work on raising the quality of teaching across many curriculum subjects.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about the recent changes at the academy and the challenges that they now enjoy in their learning. As a result, most are more focused in lessons and extending their skills in mathematics, reading and writing. One boy told me that he now likes writing, whereas he previously found it more difficult.

You have set targets for pupils that are realistic and show an improvement on last year for all year groups. You have monitoring and evaluation systems in place which allow leaders at all levels the opportunity to rigorously check the accuracy of these assessments and make sure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

Disadvantaged pupils are tracked closely, so that their progress is carefully checked to enable them to make as much progress as their peers. In 2015, disadvantaged pupils left the academy attaining the same as other pupils nationally, with gaps closing in mathematics, reading and writing.

You continue to provide strong provision for the children starting in the Reception classes. This year, you have focused on ensuring an accurate view of the starting points of children. This has been externally verified and ensures a robust benchmark for future assessment and information regarding the progress of this cohort.

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

The date for the external review of governance is set for January 2016. Governors have already increased their monitoring of the academy. They visit more regularly and receive information from a number of leaders so they are starting to hold the academy more robustly to account for the quality of provision.

The external support you have brokered through the local authority is useful and effective in helping you adapt plans and actions so that you continue to raise the achievement of pupils and fully embed the systems within the academy.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector