

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 February 2016

Mr Richard Mansfield
Headteacher
Pennine Way Junior Academy
Pennine Way
Swadlincote
Derbyshire
DE11 9EY

Dear Mr Mansfield

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pennine Way Junior Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 26 January 2016, 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 that 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 first monitoring inspection since the academy 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.

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 academy.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher and senior management team, representatives of the governing body, including the chair, and a group of the teaching staff. I held a telephone discussion with the academy's school improvement partner. I met with a group of pupils and held other informal discussions with pupils. I visited all classrooms. I looked at safeguarding records, the latest data available on the pupils' achievement, and evaluated the latest version of the academy improvement plan.

Context

There have been no significant changes at the academy since the inspection. The academy is increasing in size and, at the time of my visit, building works for new classrooms were underway.

Main findings

You, other leaders and managers at the academy, and the governing body have taken action since the most recent inspection in a thoughtfully planned and coherent way. The academy's improvement plan incorporates the areas for improvement from the inspection and gives appropriate priority to them. The pace of change at the academy has increased.

You are monitoring the quality of teaching and learning at the academy more effectively than previously. The teachers confirmed to me that your observations of lessons and scrutinies of their work are focused more sharply and concentrate on the pupils' progress, particularly in writing. The feedback that you provide to the teachers as a result of your observations is leading directly to practical improvements in the teaching.

The improvements made by the teachers are leading in turn to better progress by the pupils. The teachers have raised their expectations of what the pupils can achieve. One pupil told me that, in the nicest possible way, 'The teachers are nagging us and nagging us!' Other pupils concurred, but added 'Not too much'.

The teachers use a combination of more precisely expressed targets and more consistent and clearer feedback to the pupils about their work to make sure that the pupils have a good understanding of what they do well and, particularly, what they need to improve. For example, the pupils were able to explain to me with some precision the aspects of their writing that are not good enough, referring both to their targets and to the teachers' marking in their books.

The pupils' books show visible improvements in the quality of the pupils' handwriting. This shows that the pupils are taking greater care with, and showing more pride in, their work. That sense of pride and care was evident when I spoke with the pupils. They are now more confident as writers, including the boys, not simply with their handwriting, but also in terms of the content and range of writing that they do. As a result, they are more motivated than previously to produce the best work that they can. For example, the pupils explained to me that they strive consciously now to produce their neatest handwriting for the 'masterpieces' that they have to do.

You have made sure that the focus on improving the pupils' writing is as evident in the broad range of subjects about which the pupils learn as it is in literacy lessons and other sessions focused specifically on writing. That is contributing to the pupils'

heightened sense of the importance of writing. Other approaches to teaching, such as opportunities to write independently and for 'shared composition', are adding to the pupils' motivation, particularly for the boys and also pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

You have changed completely your approach to teaching spelling. You have introduced a 'little and often' style. The teachers have noted that, as a result, the pupils are retaining their learning more effectively.

The academy's latest assessment information indicates that, currently, the pupils are making better progress in writing than in other subjects. That is an important improvement on previous years. You do not yet have, however, secure evidence that the improvement is being sustained. Despite the general improvement in the pupils' test results in 2015, the difference between the pupils' achievement in writing compared with other subjects is still very evident; which means that the job is not yet done.

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

External support

You have taken the initiative and arranged appropriate and effective external support to assist with your improvements at the academy. The governing body has ensured that funds are available to pay for the services of a school improvement partner. Your work with the school improvement partner has been an important factor in helping you to become more sharply focused in your work to monitor the quality of teaching and learning at the academy and to increase the pace of change. The school improvement partner has also provided you with a link with a good school. That link is providing the teachers with useful opportunities for professional development, which they are using well to make improvements at Pennine Way. You have also, appropriately, purchased additional support from the local authority, which is helping you to make improvements in the way that you teach literacy.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire, and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss
Her Majesty's Inspector