

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



25 May 2016

Mr Simon Duffy
Headteacher
Chipping Norton School
Burford Road
Chipping Norton
Oxfordshire
OX7 5DY

Dear Mr Duffy

Special measures monitoring inspection of Chipping Norton School

Following my visit with Suzanne Richards, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 11–12 May 2016, 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 that have been taken since the school’s recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in December 2015.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school’s combined statement of action and improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2015.

- Make rapid and secure improvements to the progress of disadvantaged pupils (those who are eligible for government funding known as the pupil premium) by:
 - prioritising their achievement in planning at all levels
 - monitoring the impact of the pupil premium expenditure closely and frequently
 - making sure that their attendance at least matches the average attendance of other pupils nationally
 - ensuring that leaders and governors check that necessary improvements have been made at appropriate points throughout the year.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - setting out in the development plan clear targets and descriptions of what will be achieved at key points in the year to enable senior leaders and governors to monitor the impact of actions throughout the year
 - ensuring that judgements of the quality of teaching take account of its impact on pupils' learning over time
 - improving performance management systems to support better teaching and learning
 - extending senior leaders' and governors' understanding of good and outstanding practice
 - ensuring that governors use a range of information about outcomes for all groups of pupils to offer effective challenge and support to senior leaders.

- Improve the progress of all pupils, especially in English, by ensuring that teaching:
 - provides consistent and high levels of challenge, appropriate to pupils' needs and abilities
 - improves pupils' progress in Key Stage 3 so that they begin GCSE courses with a strong foundation
 - enables pupils currently in Key Stage 4 to catch up to make up for previous poor learning
 - eliminates any low level disruption to lessons.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers until further notice.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 11 to 12 May 2016

Evidence

Inspectors made visits to 19 lessons, many of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at a very wide range of pupils' work and spoke to pupils in prearranged meetings, in lessons and around the school. Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, teachers, governors (including the chair of the governing body) and a group of parents. Inspectors scrutinised school documentation, including safeguarding records, the school's combined statement of action and action plan and the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing. Inspectors considered 144 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire). Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour including at lunch and breaktimes. The lead inspector held separate telephone conversations with an independent consultant who is supporting the school and with the education adviser from the Department for Education (DfE).

Context

Four teachers and six support staff have left the school since the inspection; three teachers and eight support staff have joined. While the DfE has had some initial exploratory discussions with school leaders about the possibility of joining a multi-academy trust, no firm decisions have been made yet. The leader for the sixth form was appointed as an assistant headteacher from April with the specific role of improving the quality and use of the school's information about pupils' achievement. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the school's professional tutor both joined the senior leadership team in January.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders' actions since the inspection have lacked the necessary rigour, urgency and impact. Although they accept the inspection judgements, too many of their subsequent actions have been relatively recent. Leaders' judgements about how well the school is doing remain inaccurate and overgenerous. The headteacher has communicated the school's priorities to both staff and parents, especially the school's commitment to improving disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. However, this has not led to a clear pathway to improvement. The school's action plan does not contain targets which are ambitious or comprehensive enough; nor does it clearly show how these will be achieved or by when. The external review of the use of the pupil premium was completed just over a month ago, meaning that leaders have had a limited time to act on the recommendations. As a consequence of these weaknesses in leadership, improvement has been too slow.

Leaders' work to improve teaching has had limited impact. Leaders now observe teaching much more regularly but this has not been targeted sharply enough at the teachers who need to improve the most. Leaders do not have an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching across the school, believing most teaching to be good. A new assistant headteacher has made sure that pupils' progress is now tracked comprehensively, but this is a very recent development, especially at key stage 3. Leaders have made no concrete links between their judgements about the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes: there are plans in place to begin to do this but not until July. In general, leaders only check that teachers are complying with new processes or approaches rather than evaluating the impact on pupils' progress. There has been insufficient focus on raising levels of challenge for all pupils, including, importantly, the most able. The process of managing teachers' performance has rightly been revised and all teachers are now set a target focused on improving disadvantaged pupils' outcomes.

Governors demonstrate a solid resolve to improve their effectiveness. They have usefully clarified their roles in evaluating the school's work and have formed a specific group of governors for this sole purpose. Crucially, they have ensured that they get the information they require about pupils' progress in order that they can accurately assess the impact of leaders' actions. They have a timetable in place to track disadvantaged pupils' progress. Governors' challenge and support for leaders is improving, although this is not always forthright enough about the pace of improvement. The external review of governance has been completed and governors have begun to act on the recommendations. However, governors recognise that they have not acted fully effectively since the inspection because they have not yet made sure that the school's combined action plan and statement of action is a useful document to steer improvement. Weaknesses in leadership hamper governors' abilities to hold leaders fully to account for improvements, especially in relation to improving teaching. Governors are clear, however, that teaching is a long way from being good overall.

The SENCo has done a great job in working with staff across the school to make sure that pupils with special educational needs or disability get the extra help they require to make better progress. Subject leaders have recently begun to play more of a role in improvement, mostly through observing lessons more regularly and providing some focused support for teachers. The subject leader for English has worked effectively to improve the progress of Year 11 disadvantaged pupils and lower-ability pupils in Year 7 in this subject. However, subject leaders are not yet doing enough to make sure pupils are challenged enough in lessons.

The majority of parents who have responded to Parent View in the last year are strongly supportive of the school, as were the parents inspectors spoke to during this visit. In particular, they feel well informed by leaders about planned developments. For example, the school held two meetings for parents following the inspection and leaders produced a newsletter to specifically update parents about intended improvements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

While teaching in the sixth form remains strong, it is very variable across the rest of the school despite teachers' generally good subject knowledge. Senior leaders have introduced new ways to assess pupils' learning and hone teachers' feedback so that pupils are clear about how to improve their subsequent work. Pupils largely welcome these approaches but rightly recognise that this feedback is not always as helpful as it should be. Equally, too many teachers are not following the school's new assessment policies. When teachers use these approaches well, however, they are making a positive difference to pupils' learning.

Disadvantaged pupils are not routinely getting the extra help they need in lessons to accelerate their progress. Teachers now know who the disadvantaged pupils are in their classes. The strategies that some teachers are using to offer these pupils more support and challenge are too recent to demonstrate any real impact on pupils' progress. The disadvantaged pupils inspectors spoke to during this visit reported that, when used, these strategies often do not improve their understanding effectively enough. This was confirmed by the evidence inspectors gathered in lessons and by scrutinising pupils' work.

Wide variations remain in the levels of challenge teachers offer pupils in lessons. Pupils do not experience a diet of routinely challenging tasks because teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough over time. Too often, teachers set pupils work which is not demanding enough but which is peppered intermittently with harder work. As a result, pupils' understanding is not deepened and their skills are not extended as much as they should be. This is typified by the most-able pupils as when they are stretched they often excel, but this level of challenge is not yet frequent enough.

Some teaching is very effective. Where this is the case, pupils make strong progress. However, leaders are not yet sharing this good practice widely enough across the school. Teachers and leaders have focused efforts on improving Year 11 pupils' progress with some success. This has mostly been through giving pupils extra help during lessons and through other approaches like extra support and revision sessions outside of lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are polite and generally very respectful of each other and their teachers. Relationships between pupils and teachers in lessons are usually highly positive. Most pupils enjoy school and are eager to do their best. Pupils take pride in their appearance and their school. However, they do not always take enough care with the presentation of their work, which means it is sometimes untidy and disorganised. Despite a tightening-up on rules about pupils' behaviour, some low-level disruption remains. This occurs when teachers' expectations of pupils' learning

and behaviour are too low. Although there is a good level of staff supervision in corridors around the school when pupils are moving between lessons, some overly boisterous behaviour by a minority of pupils disrupts an otherwise calm atmosphere.

Pupils' attendance is beginning to improve overall. The number of pupils who are regularly absent has halved. This includes some disadvantaged pupils and some pupils with special educational needs or disability whose attendance has been low in the past and who are now coming to school more often. Leaders' commitment and persistence in this area of work is paying dividends. However, although overall attendance figures are starting to rise, leaders have not yet set ambitious enough targets for improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding remain effective. Pupils rightly say they feel safe at school. Staff are appropriately trained and liaise well with external agencies when necessary.

Outcomes for pupils

The school's own performance information forecasts that many current Year 11 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are on track to make better progress this year. While this includes English, which has been much weaker in the past, pupils are still not making as much progress in this subject as they are in other subjects, for example mathematics. Pupils' outcomes continue to be strong in the sixth form and the school's predictions suggest pupils are set to achieve more highly in 2016 than in 2015.

The gaps between disadvantaged pupils' achievement and that of other pupils are closing in Year 11. The same is not true in other year groups. For example, gaps in Year 10 remain wide in both English and mathematics. Since the school has very recently produced comprehensive performance information for pupils in key stage 3, leaders have only just identified that there are a number of wide gaps in English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9. Evidence gathered by inspectors through looking at disadvantaged pupils' work confirmed these differences between their achievement and that of other pupils.

Boys are underachieving in English and they generally make much less progress than girls. These gaps are over twice the national average in Years 10 and 11 and are also present in key stage 3. Leaders currently have no specific actions in place to tackle this important issue.

The progress of pupils with special educational needs or disability is improving. Leaders are not currently analysing the achievement of the most-able pupils, as they have not identified this as a priority: inspection evidence demonstrates that it should be. Although some of the most-able pupils are achieving well, this varies too much over time and between different subjects because they are not consistently stretched enough.

External support

Following the inspection, leaders swiftly sought support and challenge from an external consultant who has visited the school twice and been in regular contact with leaders. Although the consultant has set some pertinent actions for leaders, these have had limited impact. For example, the consultant has supported leaders with developing the school's action plan but it is still not fit for purpose. At times, the consultant's written feedback to leaders and governors is too positive, which has contributed to leaders' overgenerous view about how well the school is doing. An education adviser from the DfE monitors the school's progress closely. He has visited the school once and is due to do so again imminently.