

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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29 June 2016

Mr P Shackleton  
Oldbury Academy  
Pound Road  
Oldbury  
West Midlands  
B68 8NE

Dear Mr Shackleton

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oldbury Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 15 June 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 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 September 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in September 2015, the academy was also judged to require improvement.

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

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, core subject leaders, pupils from Years 9 and 10, sixth-form students, and the chair and vice-chair of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The academy's improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and data about achievement and attendance were evaluated. Records of bullying incidents and a number of detailed case studies of how the academy dealt with these were scrutinised. In addition, joint lesson observations were undertaken with a member of the senior leadership team.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection that judged the academy to require improvement in September 2015, 12 teachers have left the academy and appointments have been made to replace them all. The previous substantive headteacher, who was part-time in autumn term 2015, retired at the end of that term. You were also part-time acting headteacher between September and December 2015. From January 2016, your role became full-time and will be made substantive from September 2016. In January 2016, a new deputy headteacher took

up post and the senior leadership team was restructured. Since January 2016, lead teachers in core subjects have been appointed and middle leadership teams have been restructured.

## **Main findings**

All areas for improvement from the last inspection are being addressed effectively. Although improvements have been taking place since the inspection in September 2015, the pace of improvement has increased rapidly since January 2016 when you took up your post full-time. There is a real sense of shared vision and purpose among staff and a clear energy and enthusiasm to improve the academy. More stable staffing and the recruitment of high-quality, experienced staff are enabling leaders to implement and embed new strategies more effectively.

Governors have a very good understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and use this to challenge leaders effectively. Their thoughtful approach to succession planning has ensured the stronger leadership capacity now evident.

Leaders' roles and responsibilities have been clarified and lines of accountability strengthened. All leaders are now more strategically involved in meeting academy improvement targets and addressing priorities. There is a clear structure of support and challenge for middle leaders, who, as a result, are more confident and effective in their roles. Leadership of the sixth form has improved and sixth form students are very positive about changes to the level of support they now receive.

Monitoring systems enable the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to be evaluated more effectively. A new marking and feedback policy has been introduced, although leaders recognise its impact on improving pupils' learning is still developing. More rigorous and regular monitoring of pupils' progress ensures underperformance in all year groups, from pupils in Year 7 to students in the sixth form, is beginning to be identified quickly and tackled effectively.

Observation during the inspection and school monitoring evidence indicates that teachers are increasingly making better use of assessment data to inform their planning. As a result, they are better able to match learning activities to pupils' starting points and to ensure that pupils are challenged more effectively to make the progress they are capable of.

Robust systems are in place to monitor and improve the attendance of all groups of pupils. Pupils report that behaviour has improved because of higher expectations, a more consistent approach by teachers and better communication in the academy. They suggest that this is particularly since January 2016. They say they feel safe and well supported in school and are confident that teachers and leaders will deal with any of their concerns promptly. Incidents of negative behaviour have declined since January 2016. Evidence, from detailed case studies of how leaders and governors deal with instances of bullying, indicates that processes to deal with bullying are thorough and exhaustive.

The academy's information about current progress for all year groups and predictions of attainment for Year 11 pupils and sixth-form students indicate improvements on results in 2015. As a result of an external review of pupil premium funding in November 2015, the use of such funding is now directed more effectively to the needs of disadvantaged pupils and its impact on outcomes is evaluated more specifically. The early impact of revised

strategies to support these pupils is positive. Gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the academy, and nationally, are narrowing, although the rate at which these gaps are narrowing is not yet rapid enough.

### **External support**

External support is strong. Current leaders have been proactive in developing effective links with other schools, external organisations and individual experts, to support the academy in improving the accuracy of assessment, the quality of teaching and learning, and leadership and management. Actions taken include: the external review of pupil premium funding; the achievement of the Investors in People silver award in April 2016; work with a range of other schools to undertake peer reviews and external moderation of coursework assessment; work with the national leader of education from Lightwoods Primary School in Oldbury to sharpen leadership and management further; and the use of external consultants to provide regular challenge to faculty leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**