

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 September 2016

Mr Jeff Kay
Acting Headteacher
Lady Hawkins' School
Park View
Kington
Herefordshire
HR5 3AR

Dear Mr Kay

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lady Hawkins' School

Following my visit to your school on 18 July 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 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 November 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 November 2015, 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- sharpen the school improvement plan so that it makes clear, for each action in the plan, who is accountable for its completion, who is responsible for monitoring its completion and who is responsible for evaluating its success
- ensure that leaders and governors are clear about what the school's assessment information is telling them about pupils' progress, especially that of disadvantaged pupils
- improve the progress of students in the sixth form
- urgently ensure that the school's website contains all statutory elements.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, you, other senior leaders and the chair of governors to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also held a telephone conversation with the headteacher of Wigmore High School, who is supporting the school. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I also scrutinised other documents, including minutes of governing body meetings, anonymised performance management records and school assessment information.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a new special educational needs coordinator has been appointed internally. She is sharing responsibility for special educational needs provision with the current special needs coordinator, who will leave the school at the end of the term. Two parent governors have joined the governing body. The school currently has an executive headteacher and you are acting headteacher. The executive headteacher retires at the end of term.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have reacted energetically to the previous section 5 inspection. They have drawn up a comprehensive and detailed improvement plan that tackles the areas for improvement contained in the inspection report. It also tackles other school improvement priorities. The improvement plan is fit for purpose, with clear actions, timescales and success criteria. However, for several actions, it does not make clear who is accountable for ensuring that the action takes place. Neither does it make clear who is responsible for monitoring each action's completion and evaluating its success. The school improvement plan contains a section about the sixth form, but this does not sufficiently reflect the urgent need to raise standards.

Faculty improvement plans link well to priorities contained in the school improvement plan. Regular meetings between each faculty leader and their 'faculty improvement partner', a member of the senior leadership team, ensure that plans are focused on improving teaching and pupils' progress. All teachers are set targets linked to school and faculty priorities, including that pupils should make good progress. Recent training for teachers has included planning work for pupils of different abilities. Leaders believe that this has had a positive impact, as evidenced through recent observations of teaching.

The school is rich in assessment information and leaders and governors have, at their fingertips, up-to-date data about pupils' progress, both for individual pupils and for groups, such as disadvantaged pupils. The information presents a broadly improving picture of pupils' progress, especially in the sixth form, where outcomes were low in 2015. Improvement for disadvantaged pupils is mixed. For example, in Year 11, gaps with other pupils nationally are set to close in English, but to widen in

mathematics. Leaders do not always interrogate assessment information carefully and critically. As a result, they do not have as detailed a view of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' progress as they should.

The external review of the use of the pupil premium, which was recommended in the inspection report, is due to take place in September 2016. However, you have undertaken much preliminary work in revising the school's use of pupil premium, helped by the headteacher of Wigmore High School, who will also undertake the formal review in September. Leaders are now using a range of strategies aimed at raising standards for disadvantaged pupils. They are also beginning to measure impact and revise strategies in the light of their findings. Some impact on closing gaps is evident, but this is not a consistent picture.

Governors have reacted positively to the comments about governance in the inspection report and they are determined to improve. Governors now receive more regular and detailed information from leaders about the school's performance and they are beginning to use this to hold leaders to account. For example, governors have asked why the gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others are closing faster in some year groups than others.

Governors now visit the school more regularly and with a greater purpose. They routinely speak with pupils and are setting up better systems to listen to parents' views. The governing body is evaluating its effectiveness and making changes as a result. For example, new governors are being recruited to bring additional expertise to the governing body and governors are revising their committee structure to improve its effectiveness. They have been assisted with their plans by the headteacher of Wigmore High School, who will also complete a formal review of governance in September 2016.

Governors have failed to ensure that the school's website includes all statutory elements. Since the previous inspection, leaders have revised the website so that it is easier to navigate and they have added additional elements, including the statutory pupil premium report. However, the updated website still does not contain a special needs information report and it contains no information about the governing body.

External support

Leaders and governors are making good use of external support from Wigmore High School, in the areas of improving governance and closing attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils. They access further support through the rural education partnership (REP), a network of four local schools, including two that are outstanding. The REP provides support for 'small subjects', for example in helping the school introduce a computer science course to key stage 4. St Mary's RC High School has also provided training for staff on 'growth mindsets', and this is helping pupils to develop strategies to tackle problems in different ways.

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

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector