

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Patsy Weighill
Headteacher
Bilton School
Lawford Lane
Bilton
Rugby
Warwickshire
CV22 7JT

Dear Ms Weighill

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bilton School

Following my visit to your school on 12–13 October 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 February 2016.

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

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's action plans are fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I would ask that I am informed of any decisions that may result in the appointment of newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2016.

Improve teaching so that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs or disability and the most able pupils, make good progress from their starting points in all subjects, including English, mathematics and science, by ensuring that teachers:

- plan lessons that are well matched to what pupils already understand, know and can do, so that pupils of all abilities are challenged to think deeply and work hard
- check on pupils' progress during lesson so that they can give pupils additional help or extra challenge when it is needed
- plan activities and use resources in lessons that support pupils who cannot read well.

Improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons by ensuring that:

- teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and consistently implement the school's behaviour policy
- leaders provide effective support for staff in managing challenging behaviour.

Urgently reduce the prevalence of bullying in Key Stages 3 and 4 by ensuring that:

- pupils understand that bullying is unacceptable
- systems to report, investigate and deal with bullying are effective and command the confidence of pupils.

Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels so that there is rapid improvement in the achievement of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs or disability and the most-able pupils, by ensuring that:

- all leaders have a correct view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, based upon regular and accurate evaluations of progress, teaching and behaviour
- governors have the knowledge and skills that mean they have an accurate view of the school's performance and are able to hold leaders properly to account
- training for individual teachers is based on an accurate evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses and is targeted to have maximum impact on improving pupils' outcomes
- teachers are able to make accurate assessments of their pupils' attainment
- the pupil premium grant is spent effectively to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils rapidly
- the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, especially those with weak basic skills and the most able

- middle leaders have the skills and capacity to improve teaching and raise standards in their subjects
- the mathematics department is well led and fully staffed
- there is a whole-school focus on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy, and especially reading.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 12 to 13 October 2016

Evidence

I observed pupils' learning in 12 lessons, accompanied by school leaders, across a range of subjects in key stages 3 and 4. I looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning during these visits. Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons and at social times. I also met formally with pupils on two occasions.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, school leaders and two members of the governing body. Views of parents were considered from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's analysis of current pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Additional documentation was evaluated, such as information about the quality of teaching, the school's action plans and policies.

Context

There has been some turnover of staff since the inspection in February 2016. Leaders have been able to successfully appoint replacements to all posts. Changes to the school's senior leadership team include new appointments and changing some of the roles and responsibilities of leaders. The governing body has created an action plan monitoring review group (APMRG). This group is monitoring and evaluating the progress the school is making regarding the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have responded promptly to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Their response is considered and focused on key priorities. Leaders at all levels demonstrate the capacity to improve the school through a culture of analysis and reflection, research, discussion based on evidence and a willingness to share best practice within and from outside the school. Quality checks on teaching and pupils' progress lead to accuracy of information which is evaluated robustly. Middle leaders play a full role in this monitoring process. As a result, they have a comprehensive understanding of strengths and weaknesses within their areas of responsibility. Regular meetings between middle and senior leaders ensure that accurate information is shared and contributes to the judgements about how well the school is doing. As a result leaders now have a correct view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which was an identified prior weakness.

Governors are now kept up to date about progress the school is making because they review the school's action plan more regularly. They check the judgements

leaders make through careful questioning, regular visits to the school to meet with other staff and checking the information that they receive. Governors' skills are developing because they share their knowledge and expertise with each other. This has been made possible by governors working more closely together, for example through attendance at the APMRG. The action plan, prepared in response to the previous inspection, includes success criteria that leaders and governors use to evaluate the impact of actions taken. This action plan has been replaced by the school improvement plan this year. Success criteria in this new plan are in less detail. Consequently, leaders and governors are less clear about how they will evaluate the impact of future actions moving forward this year.

The school's programme of teacher development and training is having a positive impact on teaching quality. The focus of this development responds to information leaders collect from monitoring teaching and pupils' behaviour and progress. Training accurately addresses the aspects of teaching that require improving. In addition to the training that all staff receive, individual teachers elect to participate in more development to further enhance their skills. Leaders judge the impact of this work in a variety of ways, including regular visits to lessons. The performance of teachers is managed well. Objectives are clear and based on the school priorities and the progress that pupils make. As a result, teachers know what is expected of them, and how their performance will be measured.

There have been improvements to the curriculum. These ensure that there is a greater focus on literacy and numeracy in key stage 3. Also, leaders ensure a more personalised curriculum for pupils in key stage 4 who require additional support in these important skills. The school's option process provides pupils with the opportunity to study subjects which can lead to the English Baccalaureate. An increasing proportion of pupils are opting for these qualifications, as a result of increased confidence in their ability to succeed and aspiration for future study.

At the last inspection, leaders were charged with ensuring that the mathematics department was well led and fully staffed. Leaders have successfully appointed leaders and teachers to the department so that it is now fully staffed. There exists a shared purpose in the newly formed team, and key actions have been taken to improve outcomes. Pupils are much more involved in their mathematics lessons than before, and better behaviour and work have already resulted in improvements in progress this year. Pupils are now grouped in a different way for their mathematics lessons. Although mathematics teachers now match activities more closely to what the most able pupils already understand, this has been less successful for pupils with other starting points.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Improving the impact of teaching on pupils' progress has been a key priority. Leaders have a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in teaching, gained through regular and extensive monitoring activities. These include visits to

classrooms and scrutiny of pupils' work and progress information. Teachers who do not meet expected standards receive additional support that is matched to their needs. Middle and senior leaders closely monitor this support to ensure that teachers benefit from it. Most teachers at the school have welcomed the support and development opportunities they have received, but some chose to leave last year as a result of this increased rigour. The impact of teacher development is demonstrable on pupils' attitudes and class work, but it is too soon to see the sustained impact of these improvements on pupil outcomes.

Teachers consistently apply the school's policy for marking work and giving feedback on what needs to be done to improve it. Pupils have the opportunity to respond to marking and feedback in lessons. More often than before, teachers reinforce these points during discussions. Teachers make sure that they assess the progress pupils make during lessons and use this to give additional help or extra challenge when required. Questioning is used more effectively to support and challenge pupils, developing increased detail in responses and ensuring that misconceptions are tackled. Teachers are also expected to mark pupils' work to correct spellings and punctuation. This is done to great effect in English, but it is less well embedded into teachers' practice across the entire curriculum, so pupils' errors in their literacy are not always addressed.

Leaders make sure that teachers now have information about pupils' reading ages. They use this information well to ensure that effective interventions take place for pupils whose reading age is markedly lower than their chronological age. Pupils' reading ages and their progress across a range of subjects have increased. Teachers recognise that literacy is important and has a high priority in the school, but have yet to use the information they have about the reading ages of all pupils to inform their planning and use of texts in lessons.

Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons have improved as a result of more consistent application of the school's behaviour policy by their teachers. There is a much better climate for learning in lessons. Pupils generally concentrate well on their work and stay motivated. Occasionally, teachers do not address a lack of focus from pupils swiftly enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils demonstrate positive behaviour in lessons and when moving around the school site. They are polite, friendly and very willing to talk about their work to visitors. Pupils wear their uniform well and look smart. Pupils stated that changes to routines for moving around the school between lessons, banning mobile phones, higher levels of supervision and discrete areas for different year groups to use at social times have resulted in positive changes in conduct at the school.

Teachers' consistent use of the revised behaviour and rewards systems in the school are appreciated by pupils. Pupils are clear about the consequences of their

actions. They enjoy the challenge of competing to ensure that their form has the most merits, or best attendance each week. Rewards are strongly incentivising pupils to improve their behaviour in all year groups. Leaders are able to analyse behaviour information in more detail than before, for example for particular groups of pupils. Data emerging from the new system will form a baseline for future evaluation of how behaviour changes over time.

Pupils are clear that previous high incidences of bullying, particularly cyber bullying, have been tackled effectively by staff, and this is no longer of such concern for the pupils at the school. Leaders have developed the way they investigate reports of bullying, including increased communication with parents about the actions that staff are taking. Pupils describe a shift in culture so that different forms of bullying are increasingly being perceived as not only anti-social, but also unacceptable, within the school community.

Staff have successfully addressed the higher than average proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are absent from school, as their rates of attendance have improved. However, the percentage of these pupils who do not attend school regularly remains too high. Leaders are aware of this and continue to use a range of strategies to support these pupils and their families. The number of disadvantaged pupils who were excluded from school for a short period of time due to poor behaviour has sharply reduced compared to this point last year. This has contributed to better attendance, and improved rates of progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders have taken action to make sure that assessments are of a higher quality and are more reliable than in the past. These have included checking the quality and marking of formal assessments with other local schools. As a result, assessment information is increasingly accurate. This was demonstrated in high levels of consistency between final predictions and the grades that pupils achieved in their GCSEs in 2016. Leaders are using this information to target additional support for Year 11 pupils whose progress is below that which is expected.

There is evidence that outcomes for pupils are set to improve this year. Leaders' monitoring information suggests that pupils currently in Year 11 will achieve, on average, half a GCSE grade higher than pupils who took their examinations in 2016. This looks set to include an increase in the proportion of pupils who achieve good GCSE grades in English and mathematics. Leaders expect progress to rise in 2017 but only by a small amount compared to 2016 results, and possibly to remain lower than current national rates of progress.

There was variation in the outcomes achieved by particular groups of pupils in GCSE examinations in summer 2016. Analysis shows that the use of the pupil premium funding did not have a positive impact on the academic outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. They made, on average, more than a grade less progress than other pupils

nationally. The most able pupils also did not perform well in 2016 and made over four fifths of a grade less progress than similar pupils nationally in their GCSE examinations in 2016 on average, although these results are not yet validated.

Leaders have performed calculations based on recent assessments for Year 11 pupils and unconfirmed national progress information. This analysis suggests that differences between disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4 and other pupils look set to diminish, but not to disappear completely. Their progress may improve by over half of a grade compared to 2016. Leaders aim to further reduce this difference through actions that target support specifically at these pupils. Assessment information predicts that differences between most-able pupils nationally and those currently in Year 11 will be smaller than before, and disappear the year after.

External support

The school is benefiting from a good level of support by working with two local secondary schools, Higham Lane School and Rugby High School. This work has had a positive impact and is valued by leaders. These links have backed leaders' work to ensure the accuracy of assessments of pupils' attainment. As a result, the school's GCSE examination predictions for 2016 were very close to the results that pupils achieved. Additionally, Northlands Primary School has successfully provided phonics training as part of leaders' work to develop pupils' literacy skills.

Priorities for further improvement

- Make sure that the success of targets in the school improvement plan can be easily measured so that leaders and governors can monitor the impact of actions.