

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



30 January 2017

Mr Simon Taylor
Principal
Kirkby College
Tennyson Street
Kirkby-in-Ashfield
Nottingham
NG17 7DH

Dear Mr Taylor

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Kirkby College

Following my visit with Nigel Boyd, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 18 January 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of leadership and management in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school and, as a result, pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 4.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding, including the school's safeguarding policy. Inspectors met with the principal, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, the educational welfare officer, subject leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and three other governors. Inspectors observed nine lessons. A senior leader accompanied an inspector to observe two of these lessons. The lead inspector walked the school with the principal, visited other lessons for short periods, and observed pupils receiving literacy support and support within the inclusion provision. Inspectors met with pupils, both formally and informally, and observed pupils' behaviour as they arrived at school and at breaktime. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and also reviewed documents relating to teaching and learning, pupils' achievement and pupils' safety, behaviour and welfare.

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

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

Kirkby College is smaller than the average-sized secondary school, with 469 pupils. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than that seen nationally. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who are supported by an education, health and care plan is below average. The proportion of pupils who arrive at or leave the school during the academic year is higher than the national average.

Many pupils within the school face significant barriers to their learning. These barriers are complex. Leaders, teachers and governors are committed to eradicating these barriers and do not take this responsibility lightly. They are keenly aware of the importance to the community of the success of pupils within the school. The fact remains that many pupils require intensive help so that they can come to school, learn and have their welfare safeguarded.

Extensive support is on hand for pupils and their families. Many staff go to great lengths so that pupils come to school. The education welfare officer knows pupils and their parents extremely well. She is heavily involved within the community promoting to some parents the value of school. Links with local primary schools are good and individual plans are in place for pupils who may need help when they move from the primary school to the secondary school. Pupils attend at the same rate as at other schools nationally and this is an improving picture. Pupils are not excluded. Those at risk of exclusion receive successful support and make progress in their learning. Pupils' behaviour is good. They look smart in their uniform and show pride in their school.

Some pupils and their families experience or have to deal with major and multifaceted difficulties. Senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and the education welfare officer in particular, work tirelessly with a range of agencies to obtain for pupils the help that is required. It is clear that much of the help that pupils receive is effective but that considerable challenges remain. All involved in this inspection agreed that further creative solutions were required and that the School Behaviour and Attendance Partnership could perhaps have a role in this.

The principal has tackled some significant staffing issues and has acted decisively to ensure that the best senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers are in place. It is clear that there has been a period of great staffing difficulty but this period is now over. The challenges for the school in recruiting high-quality staff cannot be underestimated, but leaders have been creative and have attracted high-quality candidates. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now more consistent.

Senior leaders are now, rightly, focused on ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is, at the very least, consistently good. There is a positive 'buzz' within the school and subject leaders were keen to inform inspectors of the difference this renewed focus has made in classrooms. Professional development opportunities are of high quality and include links with a teaching school alliance. Opportunities are provided for teachers to work together to improve and develop their practice. For example, subject leaders from a range of schools work together to check the quality and accuracy of their assessments. As a result, senior leaders are assured that GCSE assessments are accurate.

The quality of teaching is quickly improving in many areas. In English, pupils benefit from precise planning and expert guidance from their teachers. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons and make rapid progress. Inspectors also observed this positive practice within mathematics and humanities but, in these subjects, the practice was less consistent. Weaker practice was observed in science. Leaders are aware of these issues and have plans in place to improve these rapidly. The systems to manage teachers' performance are rigorous.

As a result of better teaching, pupils are making faster progress. Pupils in the current Year 11 are predicted to attain similar results to the national average in a range of subjects including English, mathematics and history. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are catching up with other pupils within the school, and the differences in achievement are diminishing. Many pupils, particularly the most able, are making rapid progress. Some pupils receive extensive help that safeguards their safety and well-being but do not make the academic progress that their starting points would suggest. This remains a continual challenge for the school and senior leaders are relentless in their efforts to tackle this.

A thorough process is in place to ensure that leaders hold teachers effectively to account for the progress that pupils make in lessons and throughout the year. Weekly meetings take place to check that pupils are on track with their learning. Regular assessments take place and are scrutinised to check that those pupils in need of extra help receive it. Pupils have many opportunities to practise examination techniques and have a good understanding of how to gain their predicted grades. Senior leaders rightly review the targets set for pupils regularly to ensure that they are suitably challenging.

Governors know the school well and the governing body works hard to tackle the issues facing the school. Appropriate committee structures are in place and the committees are effective in driving the business of the school. Financial matters are dealt with securely and governors are aware of how additional government funding is used to meet the needs of relevant pupils. Governors do not yet have a clear enough understanding of the new accountability measures for pupils' progress that they need to hold the school to account.

The pupils that inspectors spoke with said that they would overwhelmingly recommend the school to other pupils. They recognise leaders' actions to improve the school and value the extensive support, guidance and care they receive.

External support

The School Behaviour and Attendance Partnership is a formal arrangement between four local secondary schools. This partnership is effective and has had positive impact on pupils in this school. For example, since the previous inspection no pupil has been excluded. This is because leaders within the partnership work together to ensure that pupils at risk of exclusion receive appropriate support and education across the four schools. Arrangements are also in place to reduce the number of pupils who arrive at or leave the school during the academic year. These arrangements are having a positive impact and pupil numbers are stabilising.

Leaders ensure that the most is made of the expertise and training developments available from Redhill Teaching School Alliance. Training to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessment in different subjects has been particularly successful. Leaders now have evidence that teachers' assessments are accurate, particularly within English, mathematics and history.

Priorities for further improvement

- Work with partner schools to tackle the increase in the number of pupils who experience extreme difficulties that prevent them from making good progress from their starting points.
- Extend the work done to eliminate the inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment in some subjects to those where they remain, particularly science.
- Ensure that governors receive the training needed to understand the new accountability measures so that the governing body can more precisely hold senior leaders to account for pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman
Her Majesty's Inspector