

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 March 2017

Mrs J Elbaz
Headteacher
Harborne Academy
Harborne Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham
West Midlands
B15 3JL

Dear Mrs Elbaz

Special measures monitoring inspection of Harborne Academy

Following my visit to your school on 7–8 March 2017, 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 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 May 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 sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint NQTs.

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

Yours sincerely

Dan Owen
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that all pupils, especially the most able, make consistently good progress in all subjects by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of the quantity and quality of work that pupils produce in lessons
 - ask questions that make pupils think deeply and then insist on full and detailed answers
 - routinely check pupils' understanding in lessons and then tackle pupils' misconceptions
 - consistently apply the school's behaviour policy and do not tolerate low-level disruption.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management so that teaching, behaviour and outcomes rapidly improve by ensuring that:
 - leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the school
 - leaders target training at individuals, subjects and aspects of teaching where it is most needed
 - staff consistently implement school policies, including its behaviour policy and its marking and feedback policy
 - teachers have the skills to accurately assess pupils' attainment
 - governors have sufficient skill and knowledge so that they robustly hold leaders to account for the school's performance.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 7 March to 8 March 2017

Evidence

During this inspection, I observed pupils' learning in a range of subjects across the school. During these observations, I observed pupils' behaviour, looked at pupils' work in lessons and over time and spoke to pupils about their learning. I spoke informally to pupils across year groups about behaviour, attendance, their lessons and the changes that the school has made. The behaviour of pupils was observed as they arrived at the school in the morning, left at the end of the day, at lunch and breaktimes, in assemblies, at form time and between lessons. I scrutinised a range of documentation, for example records about work scrutiny, lesson observations, governor visits, attendance and behaviour. I met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, groups of pupils, the chair of the governing body and other governors. The sponsor's statement of action, the school's improvement plan, its self-evaluation, its strategic plan and its teaching, learning and assessment policies were also evaluated.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been many changes to staffing in the school. Governors have appointed a new headteacher, four members of the senior leadership team have been replaced and two more senior leaders have been appointed to start after Easter. Eight teachers and four support staff have left the school. Following support from a national leader of governance, four new governors have been appointed.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

With appropriate support from the sponsor's human resources department, the governors appointed a new headteacher in October 2016. Governors, pupils and staff consistently say that many positive changes have occurred following her appointment. For example, one member of staff commented: 'We really feel like we are going somewhere. Her clear direction gives us confidence.' Staff say that decisions are being taken much more quickly than in the past, and so positive change is happening rapidly. Evidence gathered on inspection supports this.

The challenge of improving the school is shared by everyone. The headteacher has ensured that the staff and pupils are 'on board' with the changes, and many pupils commented that lessons and pupils' behaviour have improved quickly since her arrival. She has rewritten the action plan to make it much shorter, more focused and practical. The new plan lists the specific actions that are being, and will be, taken to reach the overall aims of addressing the weaknesses from the previous inspection report.

Leaders are working with a sense of urgency to resolve the issues identified at the

last inspection. Over a relatively short period of time, they have made extensive staffing changes to the subject areas that they identify as weak. The English department is now almost entirely made up of new staff. Two science teachers starting after Easter will join two more new teachers who have already started in the science department. These appointments have begun to strengthen teaching in English and science.

The role of heads of department has been developed. Middle leaders feel more empowered to tackle weaknesses in their departments because the expectations of teachers are very clear. Middle leaders' knowledge of how well pupils are doing is improving because they have more accurate, frequent and organised assessment processes. For example, in the past, during Year 11, mock examination grades were not all based on evidence of what skills and knowledge pupils had. Consequently, heads of department did not have a clear view of which pupils were behind and why. Now, all papers are taken during three sets of mock examinations so that they have a very clear overview of the skills and knowledge pupils need to develop for them to reach their potential.

The headteacher is leading the work to develop teaching and learning. She has introduced new policies which explain in detail what is expected of teachers and pupils. Leaders monitor teaching carefully to make sure that the changes are well embedded. Evidence gathered on inspection shows that leaders take swift action when teaching or pupils' behaviour does not meet these new expectations.

Although the previous section 5 report did not recommend a review of governance, leaders and governors have sought advice from a national leader of governance to strengthen this area. Governors acknowledge that, in the past, they have not had accurate information on various aspects of the school's work and have not sufficiently held leaders to account. More focused agendas and improved communication mean that governors now have a broader and more accurate view of how well the school is developing. Leaders have introduced a new protocol for link governor visits and this works well when it is formalised, recorded and can be shared. In some cases it is not recorded formally, and actions are not agreed at the end of the visits. Leaders are working to make this more consistent.

Leaders responsible for behaviour and welfare now have a clearer view of the extent of behaviour issues in the school, and the number of incidents in lessons has fallen. They rightly identify tracking and communication as key to improving behaviour further. The logging of behaviour issues has improved, but not all staff log these issues consistently. This undermines leaders' ability to have a full view of behaviour standards across the school. Therefore, leaders are introducing a new, simpler logging system. It is too early to see the impact of this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders have established clear expectations of teachers through extensive training on the 'Harborne Quality Mark' (HQM). This is a set of 21 expectations of teachers, covering teaching and the management of pupils' behaviour and pupils' movement around the school. Governors are aware of the HQM and look for elements of it when they visit the school.

One of the expectations is that, in all lessons, teachers give tasks to pupils at one of three levels of challenge appropriate to their starting points. Pupils commented that they value this approach. They said that they are not limited to their own task but are often challenged to do the harder tasks, and that staff are vigilant when pupils improve, moving them on to the higher-level tasks. This means that pupils, especially higher-ability pupils, are being more appropriately challenged. Leaders also expect that teachers plan at least two points in each lesson where they check pupils' understanding. This is enabling teachers to address misunderstandings more frequently and consistently.

These non-negotiable expectations are having a positive impact on pupils' progress, though the impact on examination results has yet to be established. Inspection evidence and the school's own monitoring show that almost all teachers are meeting the expectations for the majority of the time. On the occasions when they are not, leaders' monitoring identifies this and support is quickly given to teachers.

Leaders identified that the inaccuracy of teachers' assessments in 2015/16 meant that teachers could not effectively support pupils who fell behind. To address this, leaders have rewritten the assessment policy to make it clearer. Teachers are basing assessments on evidence and moderating across schools in The Oaks Collegiate. Teachers have a more consistent understanding of the assessment system, which means that leaders can accurately identify where pupils are falling behind or subjects are causing concern. Year 11 have already had two sets of mock examinations and will have a further set in the coming weeks, which are preparing them well for this summer's examinations.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' attitudes to lessons have improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers, leaders and pupils agree that low-level disruption in classrooms is now much rarer. This is because leaders have focused their attention on non-negotiable elements in lesson planning, high expectations of behaviour and having consistency by using fewer supply teachers. In lessons that were observed during the inspection, pupils invariably listened carefully to their teachers, followed instructions and applied themselves to their learning.

Behaviour around the school has also improved. This is because of the new one-way system and high staff presence before and after lessons. Pupils say that this is

typical. However, some boisterousness remains. On occasions, there is some shouting and pupils say that, in crowded areas, at times some silly behaviour still takes place.

There was an increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions and behavioural incidents recorded earlier in the year as leaders and teachers established new, more robust sanctions for misbehaviour. The numbers of incidents have now stabilised. Leaders expect a rapid fall in behavioural incidents as pupils understand more consistently what is expected of them.

Outcomes for pupils

The rapid improvement in pupils' behaviour in lessons means that, in almost all lessons, teachers are free to focus on pupils' learning. The impact of this on outcomes for pupils has yet to be fully realised.

The improvement in teaching and assessment means that, across a range of subjects, pupils are making better progress. However, leaders recognise that pupils currently in Year 11 have had weak teaching for some time in some subjects. There is much ground to make up. For example, in 2016, pupils' progress in English, science, the humanities and languages was weak. Current Year 11 pupils' attainment in these subjects is still of concern, although pupils' progress has accelerated. To a lesser extent, this is also true of pupils currently in Year 10. Leaders and teachers are working tirelessly to help pupils catch up, and teachers' interventions are well directed because the assessment system is more accurate than previously. For example, leaders have restructured classes, created small intervention groups and, for some pupils, offered 8am classes three times a week. Targeted Saturday schools also aim to improve pupils' skills and knowledge.

External support

Leaders have secured a range of support. The support offered by The Oaks Collegiate for moderation of work has been very effective in quickly improving the accuracy of teachers' assessment, especially in English.

The headteacher has appointed an external consultant and two further external reviewers so that she can be sure of regular, objective feedback on the impact of the changes she is making.