

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



24 April 2017

Mark Pinchin  
Principal  
Bexleyheath Academy  
Woolwich Road  
Bexleyheath  
Kent  
DA6 7DA

Dear Mr Pinchin

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

Following my visit to your academy on 17 March 2017, 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 May 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

The academy should take further action to:

- further refine the school's assessment procedures so that all groups of pupils are provided with suitably challenging targets that teachers use to plan appropriately stretching activities
- embed the school's new behaviour and attendance systems so that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves rapidly.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held to discuss the actions taken, since the last inspection, with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, pupils,

members of the local governing body, representatives and improvement advisers from the sponsor trust. The school improvement plans were evaluated. The inspector visited lessons with members of the senior leadership team, visited the sixth form centre and scrutinised documentation relating to actions taken to improve the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. The inspector scrutinised the school's single central record of pre-employment checks made on staff.

## **Context**

The current principal has been in post since September 2016, while the school's senior and middle leadership have been restructured with new positions created on the senior leadership team, including a pupil premium leader. The governing body has also been restructured in order to provide greater scrutiny to key aspects of the school's work. The school day has been changed so that a longer form time now commences the school day from 8:30.

## **Main findings**

Since joining the school in September 2016, you have taken prompt and effective action to raise standards following the last inspection, where developments were too slow. Governors recognise that their level of challenge had not been firm enough to support a rapid drive in standards in the past. Leaders now have a more precise view of the school's strengths and weaknesses which is informed, in part, by the stronger support provided by the trust. You are highly ambitious for pupils' development and focused upon providing pupils with the education and enrichment that they will benefit from and deserve. Governors have received effective training, recruited new governors with relevant expertise and commissioned the recommended review of how the school uses the pupil premium. These actions have improved the local governing body's scrutiny of leaders' work.

Leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and plans for development are well informed by more robust systems of review for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment pupils receive, and their behaviour. External support to improve the reliability of assessment is enabling leaders to more sharply and promptly intervene if pupils risk falling behind. Pupils joining the school in Year 7 benefit from the new links being developed with local primary schools, so that pupils can effectively build upon their existing knowledge and skills. Teachers expect more of pupils, and variability in the quality of pupils' work is diminishing.

At the inspection in May, the performance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was identified within the areas for improvement. Leaders have sought to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through more effective professional development and more robust performance management processes. Staff now more skilfully plan lessons that meet pupils' needs. Middle leaders are developing the skills required to hold

teachers within their departments to account for their work. As a result, teaching and learning, and the performance of groups of pupils are improving, particularly in key stage 3 and in Year 10. Disadvantaged pupils' progress continues to lag behind other groups in key stage 4, but pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are being supported by increasingly effective and tailored provision. Current assessment information indicates that the performance of pupils in Year 11 has not improved rapidly enough. Leaders recognise this and have appropriate strategies in place to support those pupils.

The school's new assessment procedures enable staff to better monitor the performance of groups of pupils. However, the targets that some pupils work towards, particularly the most able and the most able disadvantaged, are not consistently challenging enough. A high staff turnover has limited the extent to which staff expectations remain consistently high across subjects. Science has experienced significant staff turnover in the past year. Support for staff and the subject leader is securing improvements, and pupils told the inspector that they feel that the situation is now improving. Teachers are more typically planning activities that recognise pupils' needs but are not yet consistently stretching the most able pupils to excel, because, for some, their targets are too low.

Pupils' attendance, punctuality and behaviour were also highlighted as areas for improvement at the previous inspection. Following changes to the structure of the day and a review of the school's behaviour systems and expectations, pupils' behaviour is improving and staff are better skilled at managing it. Leaders have reviewed the curriculum so that pupils have greater clarity about their options at GCSE and in 16 to 19 study programmes. This work is aimed particularly at improving lower prior attaining pupils' access to suitable courses and enhancing pupils' attitudes to school.

Pupils are now far more punctual to school and to lessons. Pupils and staff told the inspector about the marked improvement in behaviour since your arrival as principal. In particular, pupils and staff spoke highly of the shift in culture within the school. They told the inspector that the causes of poor behaviour are now dealt with as well as imposing appropriate sanctions when necessary. The school's rewards system complements this approach. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains lower than that of their peers, and leaders have strategies in place to improve this.

### **External support**

Since the last inspection, the trust has been effective in providing a range of support and resources to the school. Regular visits are made to the school by the trust's regional education adviser who is monitoring leaders' work to raise standards. Since January, the trust have provided day-to-day monitoring and support for core subject areas, including English, mathematics and the humanities, and the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The trust has also arranged for subject-specific mentoring and assessment moderation to take place. The trust encourages the principal and other senior leaders to seek informal collaboration with schools outside of the trust.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Tiplin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**