

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 June 2017

Mark Bland
Headteacher
Abbotsfield School
Clifton Gardens
Hillingdon
Uxbridge
Middlesex
UB10 0EX

Dear Mr Bland

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Abbotsfield School

Following my visit to your school on 21 June 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 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 July 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection in November 2013, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are not 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:

- ensure that leaders rapidly address the issues identified during this inspection. This includes checking that all risk assessments, policies and procedures relating to keeping pupils safe on site are checked immediately and amended as necessary
- quickly establish a learning environment and culture that promotes respect, tolerance, equality and pride among staff and pupils
- ensure that the governing body has the capacity to routinely challenge the

impact of all actions to date.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior and middle leaders and the chair and vice-chair of governors to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with the headteacher of a local school who is currently supporting the headteacher, and the local authority head of school improvement, to discuss the support that the school receives. I evaluated the school improvement plan and self-evaluation. Together with the headteacher and assistant headteacher, I visited the English and mathematics departments. I looked at the school's process for checking the suitability of staff to work at the school and records of these checks kept on the single central record. I spoke to staff and pupils informally before school and during breaktime. I examined a range of documents presented by school leaders. I examined policies and procedures for safeguarding, fire procedures and anti-bullying, due to a number of concerns raised by parents since the last inspection.

Context

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has reviewed key roles in the senior leadership team and has appointed a new head of sixth form and new head of inclusion. There have been some additions to the governing body. The school is to be renamed Oak Wood School, and will open in September 2017, admitting girls into Year 7. However, completion of the new school building has been delayed and this will not open until January 2018. As a result of a falling roll over time, the school is in a state of financial deficit. The school has experienced a turbulent year in terms of staffing, and approximately one in four teachers have left and been replaced.

Main findings

School leaders and governors, with the help of external support, know what needs to be done to secure further school improvement. They have a clear understanding that the attendance, progress and outcomes for all pupils need to improve significantly throughout the school. However, leaders and governors are not showing sufficient urgency in improving the issues identified at the last inspection.

Leaders have not established a safe learning environment in which pupils can thrive academically, socially and emotionally. They have not ensured that policies and procedures focused on keeping pupils safe are fit for purpose or applied consistently. The current site, while challenging in terms of its dilapidated buildings, is not kept clean and tidy and is not utilised well. For instance, pupils are able to use the main, concrete playground, but have no access to the well-kept, shady and beautiful gardens, which are solely for the use of staff. Many classrooms are unkempt. Leaders have not created a learning environment that pupils can be proud of.

Equally, leaders have not ensured that the learning environment promotes respect, tolerance, equality and pride in the school. Some procedures and policies relating to keeping pupils safe lack attention to detail. For instance, there is very limited staff supervision before school, though large numbers of pupils are on site. Pupils are allowed to ride bikes across the playground, in and out of those playing basketball, thus posing a serious risk of physical injury. Risk assessments, for example of fire safety and protection, are not updated effectively. Pupils mix well across year groups and, due to the school's size, know each other and their teachers well. They report that bullying is rare and can name different types of bullying. However, school records indicate that there are frequent incidents of aggressive and boisterous peer-on-peer behaviour. Racist and homophobic comments are frequent. Pupils often minimise these incidents as 'banter' and, consequently, do not report them to their teachers. Some pupils find the atmosphere, especially in the playground, intimidating. Leaders do not currently address this effectively. The new head of inclusion is currently reviewing processes for managing behaviour, both in class and during recreation times. Attendance is still too low, particularly for White British boys, an issue identified during the last inspection.

Governors know that they do not have the capacity, in terms of numbers and available time, to interrogate information provided by school leaders or obtain first-hand evidence. Consequently, they are not able to challenge them sufficiently, particularly on the impact of their actions to date or their adherence to policies and procedures. Governors are, however, dedicated and hardworking. They have successfully supported leaders through the new build and move to the new Oak Wood School.

Leaders have focused on improving the consistency of teaching. They have established a number of initiatives to encourage teachers to share best practice, both in school and with colleagues from local schools. Staff receive appropriate training and there is a coaching model, which is valued. Leaders have rightly raised expectations for planning and preparation. Teachers routinely use assessment information to ensure that 'help' and 'challenge' activities are appropriate. Leaders have rightly prioritised improving literacy, and the whole-school focus on improving writing is having an impact. Progress in 2016 was still too low, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

Middle leaders are now more confident about checking the quality of teaching and learning in their departments. Senior and middle leaders undertake regular learning walks and check the quality of pupils' work. They offer appropriate support to teachers when necessary. Pupils appear interested in their studies, although more could be done to engage them actively in their learning. Too many are removed from lessons due to low-level disruption or to 'catch up' on work. Leaders are currently reviewing the 'tuition' room facility, where pupils are sometimes sent.

External support

The local authority has provided consistently good challenge and support to the school. A consultant working as the school improvement link has been commissioned to offer support and challenge to school leaders, which they have found valuable. In January 2017, the school brokered the external support of a local headteacher from Bishop Ramsey School to address specific areas of development, particularly in leadership and management and improving teaching, learning and assessment. Further support has been sought from another local school, Harlington School, to address issues with attendance. While support and guidance have been appropriately targeted and timely, senior leaders' actions have not secured rapid enough improvement in key areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector