

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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21 July 2017

Miss Pippa Robinson  
Head of Academy  
Pheasant Bank Academy  
West End Lane  
Rossington  
Doncaster  
South Yorkshire  
DN11 0PQ

Dear Miss Robinson

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Pheasant Bank Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 6 July 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in March 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, the executive principal, senior and middle leaders, the Delta Academies Trust director of primary, and a learning director, the chair and vice-chair of the education advisory board and a group of pupils. I also made short visits to lessons with you. The trust's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, two teachers have left and another will leave at the end of term. A vice-principal and a teacher have returned from maternity leave. Two newly qualified teachers will start in September. The associate vice-principal seconded from another school has been made a permanent member of staff.

## **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

You and the executive principal demonstrate a passion for teaching and learning and a strong drive for improvement. Together, you have established an ambitious 'can do' culture that is raising expectations of what teachers and pupils can achieve.

You and your senior leaders are developing effective strategies for accelerating pupils' progress. This has had most impact in Year 6. The provisional Year 6 test results for 2017 show a marked increase in reading, writing and mathematics, including by disadvantaged pupils. Attainment in reading, although improved, is below the 2017 provisional national average. Pupils did not make enough progress in reading from their average starting points at key stage 1, despite the stronger progress they made during Year 6. Girls' attainment increased more than boys'. You have recognised the need to engage boys better in reading and writing and to challenge them more in mathematics.

You are implementing a well-conceived strategy to extend the stronger teaching in upper key stage 2 to Years 3 and 4. Demonstrations and coaching by senior and subject leaders are enabling less experienced staff to implement new approaches to teaching reading, writing and mathematics. Joint planning, team teaching and visits to observe good practice in other schools are providing teachers with effective support and clear direction. Plans are in place to develop the science curriculum.

In mathematics, the introduction of regular testing and daily practice in arithmetic, including times tables, is strengthening pupils' basic skills in mathematics. A more methodical approach to teaching mathematical topics is securing pupils' understanding and skill more effectively.

Pupils are becoming more enthusiastic readers because of increased opportunities to meet authors, borrow books and gain rewards. New strategies to improve pupils' understanding of text and widen their vocabulary are beginning to have an effect. Some pupils lack the ability to read with speed and fluency and grasp meaning quickly. You are planning to introduce more challenging texts and to develop the teaching of inference.

The teaching of writing is enabling pupils to produce longer pieces with better handwriting and presentation. You are planning to increase the frequency that pupils write in order to accelerate the improvement in quality. In Years 3 to 5, the proportion of pupils at age-related expectations is lower in writing than in reading and mathematics. You are also strengthening the consistency of teachers' written and verbal feedback to pupils. You plan to work with other schools to check the accuracy of teachers' assessment in Years 3 to 5.

The number of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics is limited. You plan to focus more analytically on the progress of the most able and

to identify more precisely what they need to make more rapid progress. You want the most able pupils to tackle more challenging problem-solving activities in mathematics and to demonstrate more flair in writing.

You are assessing the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities more accurately and identifying the next steps more precisely. This is at an early stage of implementation. The pupil premium review, due in September, may take account of a wider trust review of actions to improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

As a result of introducing appraisal for teaching assistants, they have set targets for their development. Your programme of professional development aims to develop their subject knowledge and their understanding of the national expectations for each year group.

Rewards and sanctions are motivating pupils to learn and behave better. The number of fixed-term exclusions is much lower than this time last year. Attendance is higher, persistent absence is lower and pupils are more punctual. Pupils said that they are enjoying learning more. They value the opportunities to correct their work and to improve weaknesses identified in tests and in their work.

The executive principal and the trust's director of primary are providing you with expert guidance and support, which is resulting in well-considered improvements. Additional senior leaders brokered by the trust are contributing well to improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. The trust and the education advisory board are providing effective support and they are monitoring the improvement plan regularly and systematically.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement action plan is fit for purpose.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**