

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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



11 October 2017

Niall McWilliams  
Executive Headteacher  
John Henry Newman Academy  
Grange Road  
Littlemore  
Oxford  
Oxfordshire  
OX4 4LS

Dear Mr McWilliams

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to John Henry Newman Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 28 September 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 June 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in June 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the most recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- rapidly improve attendance figures, particularly those of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- ensure that teachers make use of recently improved assessment information to improve their planning to more consistently meet the needs of pupils in their classrooms and accelerate their progress.

## **Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with you, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Meetings were also held with six subject leaders, the chair and two members of the local governing body, and the director and school improvement officer from the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (the trust). Together with senior leaders, I made short visits to lessons in Reception and key stages 1 and 2, where we examined a selection of pupils' books and teachers' assessment records. I reviewed a wide range of documents including: the single central register, the school's website, attendance records, monitoring and action planning documents, and several policies. I observed an assembly, and checked pupils' behaviour at breaktime. I also met with a small group of pupils, and met some parents informally at the beginning of the day to gather their views.

## **Context**

There has been a period of significant staffing turbulence and considerable change in the leadership of the school. Since the previous inspection, 13 teachers have left the school and eight have joined. In total, 31 members of staff have left the school and been replaced since the summer of 2016.

At the time of the last inspection several members of the local governing body, although highly experienced, were new to their roles in this school. They have ensured some consistency over the last two years and have worked hard to recruit and retain staff. After two changes of senior leadership which occurred in quick succession, you and the headteacher were appointed at Easter 2017 by the trust. Together, you have wasted no time in restructuring your senior and middle leadership team. In addition, the headteacher has introduced new assessment, monitoring and tracking systems with a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching across the school, particularly focusing on key stage 2.

## **Main findings**

The trust and local governors have worked hard to overcome significant challenges which arose following the previous inspection. Recognising the strength of the senior leadership that you offer at The Oxford Academy, the trust secured your leadership for an initial contract of two years to bring about much-needed stability and security to the school. The trust has a clear vision of possible strategies for long-term leadership arrangements to continue this stability. It is committed to working with the current leadership to ensure that these strengths are maintained.

You bring with you a wealth of experience of leading improvement in schools facing similar circumstances. This is valued by teachers and parents. The pupils comment on how things have improved since the headteacher and you have arrived. Local governors and the headteacher have worked hard to ensure that the school is now

fully staffed with appropriately qualified teachers, and staff morale has greatly improved. Despite the previously high staff turnover, and a large number of leaders being new to their roles, the school is now improving. However, the pace of this improvement towards meeting the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection has been limited by this staffing turbulence and the historically weak teaching and assessment practice. Recognising this, the headteacher has worked with the trust and other local schools to introduce a package of bespoke teacher training and moderation. This has enabled you to take decisive action to restructure the school day and the teaching and assessment of mathematics and English this year. Consequently, staff are able to better understand the curriculum requirements and target their planning and teaching on meeting the needs of the pupils.

More accurate assessment systems, together with regular pupil progress meetings and clearer lines of accountability, are promoting a culture where teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Recognising that the strongest teaching is in early years and key stage 1, the headteacher swiftly restructured teaching and monitoring systems to distribute these examples of best practice across the school. You rightly recognise that there is more work to do to ensure that all teachers have consistently high expectations, particularly in key stage 2.

Provisional key stage 2 outcomes information shows slight improvements in the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in reading and mathematics in 2017 compared to the previous year. Nevertheless, the progress these pupils made from their starting points was below that of 2016, and the standards achieved in 2017 are still well below national levels. Last year, the outcomes in writing fell further. However, partnership work has ensured better moderation of standards, and teachers are now more accurate in their assessment of pupils' writing skills. You and your new leadership team are aware of the urgency of continued improvements to teaching and learning and of refining monitoring systems across the school as your new termly assessment system becomes established.

My visits to classrooms with senior leaders identified how most teachers make use of the new school assessment information, introduced this term, to help plan their lessons. The headteacher and senior leaders are very aware that rapid actions are needed to ensure consistently high-quality teaching and learning across the school. These actions are needed to accelerate all pupils' progress in order to enable a greater proportion of them to achieve age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.

Recognising a weakness in provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, leaders have acted promptly to introduce a raft of new support systems and resources. The new special educational needs coordinator has become highly motivated by her recent training and is driven to rectify this weakness. She has already improved assessment and tracking, and has introduced more appropriate provision for these pupils. Consequently, the identification and

registration of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have already significantly improved. Teachers are now being provided with useful information and strategies to support individual pupils in class. Work to provide similar bespoke support for disadvantaged pupils is not as well developed and teachers are not yet routinely planning and delivering lessons to meet the needs of this group. Although not requested by the previous inspection, aware of the many changes that have occurred at the school, the new headteacher has wisely taken the decision to conduct an external review of the use of the pupil premium in order to quickly address this issue.

During our visits to lessons, we observed that nearly all teachers have adopted the school's new marking and feedback policy introduced this term. There is some variability across the school in terms of the impact this is having at this early stage on teachers' planning activities that meet the pupils' needs. However, we did see some examples of teachers' effective questioning, enabling them to refine and adapt tasks responding to pupils' misunderstanding. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, the teacher asked open and probing questions to support a group of pupils struggling with rounding numbers to the nearest 10 while others worked independently on a series of more challenging tasks. Similarly, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, the teacher used the assessment of pupils' prior understanding to devise different activities to support some pupils who needed to catch up, while providing increased challenge to others. As a result, pupils with lower prior attainment were supported to develop their skills. The most able pupils also benefited from being challenged to use their reasoning skills to explain how they were able to work out their fractions.

You have very recently introduced new school self-evaluation and improvement planning documents. You have a new plan in place, which contains suitable actions. However, this plan is not yet a sharp enough tool for driving the rapid improvements that are needed. It does not accurately identify starting points, clarify lines of accountability or set specific milestones by which to measure the impact of your actions. This year, many subject leaders are new to their roles; some training has already occurred and further training is planned. However, these leaders need crystal-clear priorities shared in a highly focused improvement plan to enable them to effectively raise standards in the timescales required. Similarly, governors need access to more detailed planning to hold leaders to account more robustly for the progress of different groups of pupils.

In 2016, the overall attendance figure was significantly below the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was particularly low. Last year, the overall attendance figure declined from this already low figure, and the attendance of these vulnerable groups remain significantly below national figures. Leaders have systems to ensure regular liaison with home, and to involve outside agencies, where necessary, to target improvements to attendance. However, a much greater priority needs to be given by the trust and governors to promoting the value of good attendance within

the local community. The school needs to ensure a rapid increase in attendance and reduction in persistent absence for these vulnerable groups of pupils in particular. School improvement plans need clear and detailed actions and planned milestones of expected improvements in attendance by set points in time. Using these measures, governors need to be sharper in their work to hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions to improve attendance, meet the needs of these groups and accelerate the progress these pupils make.

### **External support**

The quality and frequency of external support have improved. Teachers and leaders now benefit from regular visits and coaching from experienced staff at The Oxford Academy. In addition, the school improvement officer offers a comprehensive package of training for leaders and teachers from the trust. Leaders are outward-looking and work in partnership with a local network of schools. This has enabled training for teachers, resulting in improved understanding of national curriculum requirements and more accurate external verification of the standard of pupils' work.

Wisely, this comprehensive package of support is planned to continue this year. After the delay caused by the challenging circumstances of last year, school leaders, governors and trustees are aware of the urgent need to work in continued partnership to fully embed the new initiatives introduced this year.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the chief executive officer of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**