

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Martin Giles
Meridian High School
Fairchildes Avenue
New Addington
Croydon
Surrey
CR0 0AH

Dear Mr Giles

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Meridian High School

Following my visit with Sophie Welch, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 12 October 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance) and outcomes for pupils at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors visited 13 lessons with members of the school's leadership team and scrutinised pupils' work. Inspectors visited the Spectrum Centre (a resourced provision for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder) and the Student Referral Centre. Meetings were held with leaders, members of the trust and chair of the governing body, the local authority's director of education, staff and pupils. Inspectors scrutinised documentation including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and plans for development; reports into the school's performance, leadership and management by the trust; assessment information; and information about the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disability and those who are disadvantaged. Inspectors considered the views of seven parents who emailed.

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to

safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Inspectors discussed the school's safeguarding arrangements with leaders, staff and pupils.

Context

In October 2016, the school joined the GLF Schools multi-academy trust. The headteacher has been in post since September 2014 and the senior leadership team has joined the school since then. There are currently 550 pupils on roll between Years 7 and 11. There is no sixth form currently operating. The majority of pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds and a larger than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A larger than average proportion of pupils have education, health and care plans, the majority of whom receive specialist support through the school's resourced provision for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder.

Inspection findings

Leaders and the trust have a precise and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas in need of development. The trust has been effective in supporting leaders' identification of the issues that remain unresolved and hinder pupils' learning. The headteacher has been accurate in his evaluations in the past but lacked the staffing capacity to bring about the required improvements quickly enough. Improvements in the pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning have provided a good starting point for further developments recently. Staff and the local authority reported to inspectors that the headteacher has made some crucial improvements to the school over time. The trust's support is now adding much-needed impetus for further developments.

In 2016, pupils made broadly average progress across the curriculum, including disadvantaged pupils. Pupils from different starting points made similar progress. Provisional information from the Department for Education indicates that pupils made far less progress than average last year across all areas of the curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils' performance reflects that of other pupils in school. The most able pupils made less progress than their peers did. Leaders told inspectors that these outcomes came as a shock because last year they focused too heavily on inaccurate predictions. By contrast, the school's assessment information for pupils' actual performance up to the summer examinations was far more precise in matching the actual GCSE outcomes. Leaders have changed the way they evaluate pupils' performance to inform more accurately the support they give pupils.

Assessment information is collected routinely to support leaders and teachers identify underperformance. Subject leaders check teachers' accuracy of assessment through routine moderation that now includes support from expert staff across the trust. Current assessment information indicates that pupils' performance is improving year on year, with pupils in Year 7 doing better than their peers in Year 8 who in turn are doing better than pupils in Year 9. Leaders identify that they are

trying to overcome a legacy of underperformance in older year groups. Pupils in Year 11 are currently underperforming significantly. Leaders have put strategies in place to support pupils to make accelerated progress but it is too soon to tell whether they are working.

Leaders' analysis of the reasons behind last year's disappointing outcomes is effectively supporting new strategies to raise standards. New appointments to teaching staff, more bespoke training, particularly for middle leaders, and support from staff across the trust are improving systems and processes. The trust is rigorous in holding leaders to account. As a result, improvements have accelerated recently, including in how teachers use assessment information to inform their planning and support pupils' progress through more incisive feedback on pupils' performance. Leaders are correct to identify that further work is required to ensure that support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is as effective in mainstream lessons as it is in the resourced centre. For example, teachers do not consistently plan activities that pupils can access and teaching assistants still do too much of the work for some pupils.

Pupils join the school with lower than average literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders have recognised that pupils' development of literacy skills has been insufficient in the past. Strategies to improve pupils' reading have helped improve their access to and appreciation of literature. However, teachers have not been as effective in developing pupils' literacy to help them access the curriculum and make better progress in their subjects. Lower-ability pupils struggle to make links between key concepts while the most able are not sufficiently stretched to make good progress from their higher starting points. A senior leader now has responsibility for this area of the school's development and has recently put into place plans to improve pupils' literacy skills.

Leaders have planned a curriculum that balances their high ambition for pupils' development and the school's resources. It provides pupils with the opportunity to be successful when they leave at the end of Year 11. Pupils study a suitable range of subjects to match their aspirations and prior learning. Leaders have thought carefully about the range of subjects offered from Year 7 to Year 11 to make the curriculum accessible to pupils no matter what their starting points are. However, weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment, including poor literacy skills development, mean that pupils' progress has been poor. The careers, advice and guidance that pupils receive in key stage 4 effectively support pupils to progress onto suitable 16 to 19 study programmes, training and employment. However, the advice and guidance provided to pupils lower down the school is not as well developed. Developing this provision is part of leaders' plans to raise aspirations.

Leaders have ensured that there is an effective culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff are very knowledgeable about the risks posed to their pupils and understand how local context and pupils' needs link to potential risks. Training and improved systems effectively support staff to fulfil their responsibilities. Pupils told

inspectors that they feel happy and safe at school. They also said that bullying does happen sometimes but that teachers are good at dealing with it. Pupils who receive support through the Spectrum Centre told inspectors that they feel well supported and part of the school community. The few pupils who attend alternative provision to support their behaviour needs are closely monitored and well supported so that they can return to mainstream lessons in school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that prompt and effective support helps Year 11 pupils of all abilities to make much-improved progress across all subjects.
- Embed strategies to improve assessment, teaching and leadership so that pupils' progress is consistently good or better across subjects and year groups.
- Improve pupils' literacy skills so that their access to the curriculum is unhindered, particularly that of low prior attainers.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Tiplin
Her Majesty's Inspector