

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 December 2017

Mrs Dawn Garratt
Headteacher
Silvertrees Academy
Silvertrees Road
Tipton
West Midlands
DY4 8NH

Dear Mrs Garratt

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Silvertrees Academy

Following my visit to your school on 30 November 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 academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are 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 the governing body has sufficient expertise and capacity to hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders and three members of the governing body, including its interim chair, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated, as were several other documents including those relating to the

monitoring of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and external reviews of pupil premium use, governance and the early years. Brief visits were made to some classes with the key stage 1 leader.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, the chair of the governing body has changed twice, most recently two weeks ago. The governing body currently has several vacancies, but two additional governors are set to join later this term. Two teachers have retired and have been replaced. A new 'pupil premium leader' took up post in September 2017. The school admitted two-year-old pupils and full-time three-year-old pupils for the first time in September 2017.

Main findings

Leaders' plans and actions in response to the section 5 inspection have been thoughtful, well planned and thorough. Consequently, improvement is evident in all areas identified as needing attention in the inspection report.

Leadership roles and responsibilities are now well distributed among senior and middle leaders. Other staff are currently in the process of taking on some subject leadership roles. Middle leaders, who were new to post at the time of the inspection, are now taking a full role in leading their areas of responsibility. Senior leaders support them well and they also benefit from external support and training. Together, senior and middle leaders form a strong and united team that is leading improvements across the school.

Leaders' monitoring of teaching is thorough. They regularly observe lessons, carry out briefer 'drop-ins' and scrutinise pupils' work. They check that teachers' assessments are accurate. They provide teachers with regular feedback and teachers embrace these opportunities to improve their practice. Consequently, teaching has improved since the inspection and it continues to do so.

Leaders have introduced new systems to check on pupils' progress this year. Monitoring of pupils' progress is now regular and detailed. Teachers and leaders use this information very well to identify pupils who need extra help. Additional support takes many forms but is typically for a short period and focused on a specific area where a pupil is falling behind. Teachers and teaching assistants then check that the extra help has had the desired impact.

There is early evidence that the progress of these pupils is accelerating as a result and this is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Following February's inspection, governors commissioned an external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding. Acting on its recommendations, leaders

appointed a pupil premium leader. The school's pupil premium strategy is now clear and comprehensive. Leaders track the progress of disadvantaged pupils closely and intervene when they need extra help. Much improved data tracking means that leaders and governors are now well placed to evaluate the impact that interventions are having.

The physical education (PE) and sport premium is used well to encourage pupils' physical activity and to develop staff expertise. For example, the recent refurbishment of outdoor areas has encouraged pupils to be more active at breaktime and lunchtime. Regular 'health and fitness days', where several sports coaches spend a day in school, have helped to introduce pupils to new sports and activities.

Governance has been strengthened since February's inspection. Acting upon the recommendations of an external review, governors streamlined their committee structure so there are now two committees, outcomes and provision. A calendar of governors' meetings and monitoring activities has been created. Leaders provide governors with detailed, well-presented information about all aspects of the school's work. Governors are therefore well placed to question and challenge leaders. They are beginning to do so.

Despite its best efforts, the school has had trouble in recruiting governors with relevant expertise. Currently, all governors are either parents or members of staff. Consequently, expertise in some areas such as published data and finance is limited to one or two individuals. This currently inhibits the governing body's ability to fully hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's work. It is hoped that two external governors, with appropriate expertise, will join the governing body before Christmas.

Governors understand their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding. All have been appropriately trained and governors now regularly check that safeguarding requirements are in place.

At the time of February's inspection, the school's website did not contain all of the information required by the Department for Education. A new school website is now in place. It is helpful and easy to navigate. It contains all information required by the Department for Education.

Published outcomes for key stage 1 in 2017 showed improvement in all areas. Pupils achieved similar standards in reading, writing and mathematics as other pupils nationally with the same starting points. The improvement was most noticeable for low-attaining pupils and in mathematics. Leaders have reorganised key stage 1 so that classes comprise pupils of all abilities where they were previously streamed by ability. This has raised teachers' and pupils' expectations and has provided low-attaining pupils with greater levels of challenge. A whole-school focus on improving mathematics teaching is helping pupils to develop a

sound understanding of mathematical concepts before moving on to more abstract ideas. Pupils' confidence in using number is growing as a result.

Outcomes at the end of Reception improved in 2017, with more than half of children achieving a good level of development. The improvement was greatest in number. The school's assessment information for current children suggests that there will be further improvement in 2018. Leadership of the early years is now well embedded and effective. Teaching is improving. The nursery has been remodelled into a single open-plan area with centralised resources. This enables children to make more choices about the activities they will try. Staff now also intervene more skilfully to move children's learning on when appropriate.

External support

Leaders have effectively drawn on several sources of external support, which have contributed to improvements in the school. A mathematics consultant has supported the development of the mathematics curriculum and teaching approaches in all classes. The local authority has supported leaders in improving their assessment and appraisal processes and systems. It has also supported improvements to the early years foundation stage. Leaders have secured links with several local schools, including jointly moderating pupils' work with its neighbouring junior school.

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

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector