

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



10 January 2018

Mr Colin Cattanach
Principal
The Bath Studio School
Frome Road
Bath
Somerset
BA2 5RF

Dear Mr Cattanach

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Bath Studio School

Following my visit to your school on 8 December 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 April 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection I met with you, senior leaders, the chair of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the Wellsway Multi-Academy Trust.

I made short visits to lessons with you to talk with pupils and determine the quality of their work. I also scrutinised records relating to pupils' attendance and pupils' outcomes, and I evaluated the school's action plans.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, you have reorganised the roles in the senior leadership team to ensure a greater focus on pupils' attendance. You have appointed a teacher with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have recently begun to work with the principal of another school in the trust. She attends the school one day each week to provide support to improve the school.

Main findings

You and your senior team have set out to address all of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. However, progress has not been sufficient in the key areas of pupils' attendance, pupils' outcomes in key stage 4 and governance.

Since the inspection in April 2017, you have reorganised the monitoring of teaching, allocating more time to senior leaders to carry out this work. In the past, senior leaders were overgenerous in their judgements of teaching. Now there is a better link between leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching and the outcomes being achieved by pupils. However, there is more work to be done to make sure that senior leaders' judgements are accurate.

You are acutely aware of the need to improve rapidly the rate of pupils' attendance. You have changed the allocation of roles in your senior team, making this area of work a high priority. There have been some successes with individual pupils, but the overall rate of attendance has not improved. A high proportion of pupils are persistently absent from school. Your senior team, and those teachers with responsibility for monitoring attendance, require further training to ensure that pupils' attendance is accurately recorded.

The governing body has been slow to react to the situation at the school. Governors are passionate about improving the achievement of pupils and they are committed to the founding vision of the school as a small institution with a distinctive curriculum. However, their ability to analyse assessment information and so understand the performance of different groups of pupils in the school has only recently begun to improve.

You have high expectations of pupils. Most pupils are taking pride in their work. For example, in the creative and media BTEC programme pupils give great care and attention to produce art work to a high standard. In mathematics and English, pupils take care to present their work well. However, you acknowledge that more needs to be done to ensure that this happens consistently.

You made your high expectations of behaviour clear to all pupils and students at the start of the academic year. The rate of fixed-term exclusions has fallen since

September 2017.

Senior leaders have developed a new system to assess pupils' attainment and track their progress. You provide training for staff and so they have a good understanding of its use. Pupils are given suitably challenging targets and parents now receive more-detailed information about pupils' achievements. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this work.

Students in the sixth form continue to enjoy the specialist teaching they receive and the wealth of specialist equipment available to them. You are ensuring that more extra-curricular activities are available to all pupils and students. They are taking up these opportunities and so becoming more involved in the life of the school.

Senior leaders with responsibility for English and mathematics are supported well by regular contact with specialist teachers in these subjects from the trust. As a result, teachers' planning has improved and pupils are being given work which is appropriate to their abilities. However, pupils in key stage 4 have not yet overcome their previous underachievement.

Ofsted will carry out a further monitoring inspection and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The trust's support for the school has not resulted in sufficient improvement in pupils' outcomes or pupils' attendance. The trust's action plan for improving the school is fit for purpose; however, a number of the actions have not yet been implemented or their timing has slipped. A review of governance at the school has not yet taken place, nine months after it was recommended at the previous inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bath and North East Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector