

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



13 February 2018

Mr Lloyd Brown
Principal
King Edward VII Academy
Gaywood Road
King's Lynn
Norfolk
PE30 2QB

Dear Mr Brown

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to King Edward VII Academy

Following my visit to your school on 25 January 2018, 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 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors 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 good. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter.

The school should take further action to:

- eradicate the persistent unacceptable behaviour engaged in by a minority of pupils
- increase the attendance of all pupils, and reduce the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent, so that it is at least in line with the national average.

Evidence

During the inspection I met with you, senior and middle leaders, other members of staff, pupils, a member of the interim executive board with responsibility for safeguarding and employees of the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust, including the chief

executive officer.

I made short visits to lessons both with you and other leaders and by myself, to talk with pupils, observe their behaviour and determine the quality of their work. I evaluated the school's action plans and scrutinised records relating to pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress, as well as other management information, and I evaluated the school's action plans. I considered written submissions from pupils and from members of staff, including 41 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the executive principal has left the school. You were appointed as substantive principal in October 2017 after serving in an interim capacity. In the same month, the trust replaced the school's local governing body with an interim executive board. You quickly implemented a plan for rapid improvement, which included the introduction of a 'zero tolerance' behaviour policy in order to reduce the incidence of disruption to learning.

Main findings

You and the senior team have set out to address all of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Your improvement plans are ambitious, comprehensive and fit for purpose. However, progress has not been sufficient in the key areas of pupils' behaviour and attendance. Changes to governance arrangements delayed the commissioning of an external report on how effectively leaders use pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. This means that you have only started to address some of the report's recommendations very recently. Plans are in place to redefine leaders' responsibilities that will enable them to work more effectively in both this and other areas, but it will be some months before they take up these new roles. Taken together, these issues have slowed the pace of improvement, and have limited the impact of the positive changes you are making to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and accelerate pupils' progress.

The behaviour of a minority of pupils is not improving quickly enough. Pupils and staff appreciate the clarity of the new behaviour policy and your determination to ensure that they are able to learn and teach within a calm and productive classroom environment. Although a small number of parents have expressed concerns about how effectively the school promotes pupils' welfare, leaders are following safeguarding policies and procedures appropriately. Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe at school. However, during the inspection, many teachers and other members of staff indicated that too often disruptive pupils are not removed from the classroom quickly, in accordance with the behaviour policy. As a result, disruption to learning continues and teachers are unable to follow the intended 'zero tolerance' approach to repeated misconduct. The majority of pupils who contributed their views during the inspection also stated this to be the case. They indicated that

as a result, the level of disruption within their lessons – across a range of subjects – was often significant and sustained. In addition, both staff and pupils stated that too often those who choose not to attend after-school detentions or serve other sanctions do so without consequence. As a result, such pupils are not deterred from engaging in subsequent misconduct. You acknowledge that the behaviour of a relatively small proportion of pupils remains unacceptably poor. During the inspection, disruptive behaviour was observed in many of the lessons visited. This was particularly evident during the afternoon, which is when teachers and other staff indicate that poor classroom behaviour is most prevalent.

You have set high expectations in respect of pupil attendance. Leaders monitor the attendance of most groups of pupils carefully, and regularly review the actions taken to reduce absence. However, overall attendance has not risen appreciably since the previous inspection and it remains too low. Persistent absence, though falling slightly overall, remains too high, significantly so for disadvantaged pupils. Levels of fixed-term exclusion also remain high, with disadvantaged pupils significantly more likely to be excluded than others. Leaders are using alternative approaches to external exclusion such as an internal exclusion room; the number of pupils subject to internal exclusion in any given week remains high and it is too soon to determine the effectiveness of these strategies.

You are making changes that are helping leaders and teachers to improve the impact on pupils' progress of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers are increasingly using their analysis of pupils' work, such as mock examinations in Year 11 and mid-year tests for other pupils, to provide individuals with precisely targeted support. Leaders' monitoring information suggests that this and other work is starting to close the gaps in many pupils' knowledge and understanding, even if their progress remains uneven between, and sometimes within, individual subject areas.

Despite the fact that leaders are tracking disadvantaged pupils' progress carefully and ensuring that teachers plan tasks and provide feedback to motivate these pupils and help them move forward, this work is having a variable effect. Too often leaders and teachers have imprecise information about pupils' barriers to learning, which limits their ability to plan tasks that help individuals to move forward in their work. Although too many disadvantaged pupils are not catching up with their peers quickly enough, their progress is accelerating in English and modern foreign languages, and in Year 11 in particular.

Increasingly, too, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points. This is because the leader who coordinates provision for these pupils is working effectively, with others, to ensure that their needs are diagnosed accurately and that staff receive guidance about how to meet these needs in the classroom. Although teachers' use of this guidance remains inconsistent in its impact on progress, your monitoring information indicates that improvement is evident, particularly in key stage 3.

With the support of the trust, subject leaders, notably those responsible for mathematics and science, are making changes to what pupils study at key stage 3. Although it is too early to evaluate fully the effectiveness of this work, these changes are starting to ensure that pupils complete challenging work that builds on what they already know and can do when they join the school. For example, extended writing science tasks in Year 9 are helping to develop both pupils' in-depth scientific understanding and their ability to communicate it effectively. During the inspection, leaders and teachers also said that the opportunities they have to observe other colleagues' effective classroom practice are helping them to develop aspects of their own teaching.

Although the trust has not ensured that behaviour and attendance are improving quickly enough, in other respects the support it is providing for you and other leaders is starting to demonstrate improvement. Each member of the interim executive board, put in place by the trust, has substantial educational expertise. This is being used to support leaders effectively in planning improvements, and it is evident that board members have high expectations and are challenging you and the leadership team to make more rapid progress.

Members of the interim executive board are helping to support aspects of your work, including safeguarding and primary-secondary transition. The board member with responsibility for safeguarding has worked effectively with members of the school's safeguarding team to address the issues identified with some safeguarding records at the time of the previous inspection. Members are aware of the need to improve behaviour and increase pupils' attendance and are challenging leaders to make the necessary changes. However, the board has not monitored disadvantaged pupils' persistent absence closely enough. Very recently, the board has commissioned external reports that provide independent perspectives upon the quality of the school's work, both in key subject areas and in respect of leaders' use of pupil premium funding. It is too soon to determine the full impact upon standards of this work.

Representatives of the trust meet with leaders regularly to monitor the progress of specific groups of pupils who are at risk of underachieving, to plan improvements and to check the effectiveness of these. Leaders and teachers value this challenge and support. Teachers are benefiting from working with other subject specialists across the trust's schools, to share ideas and resources and to confirm the accuracy of assessment. This collaborative working is informing reviews of both subject content and teaching techniques, so that the courses that pupils study match their interests and aspirations and help them to prepare for the next stage in their learning, training or employment.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the chief executive officer of the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be

published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place during June 2017

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that all leaders and governors:
 - use progress information for groups of pupils, across year groups and subjects, more sharply to support pupils to make better progress, and when making judgements about the quality of provision
 - review the use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils thoroughly so that all leaders are clear on the precise difference that this funding is making, to ensure that these pupils make rapid progress in order to attain as well as other pupils nationally
 - ensure that all qualifications that pupils access are meaningful to their aspirations and interests, and that they receive appropriate support and curriculum time to achieve well in these
 - make sure that the safeguarding records of pupils are maintained to the same level of detail as the best, most notably recording the rationale behind decisions and specific information about the routine checks made on pupils' well-being.
- Further raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes, by:
 - ensuring that all staff use the increasingly higher-quality information being provided about how to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that these pupils make good progress across the curriculum
 - using the best practice that exists in the school to raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further, most notably in mathematics and science.
- Raise standards in personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that teaching meets the needs of pupils more effectively so that those pupils who are harder to reach are engaged and enthused by their learning more consistently
 - further developing behaviour management strategies and consistency across the school so that the incidences of poor behaviour reduce more rapidly
 - continuing to work with relevant agencies and parents to increase the attendance
 - and reduce the persistent absence of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.