

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



10 May 2018

Mrs E Hayes
Headteacher
Boldon School
New Road
Boldon Colliery
NE35 9DZ

Dear Mrs Hayes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Boldon School

Following my visit to your school on 27 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

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 school should take further action to:

- commission an external review of the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils
- further accelerate pupils' progress, by improving the effectiveness of systems used to check pupils' progress
- ensure that the school's plans for improvement are fit for purpose, by setting measurable targets and stating clearly who will check and who will evaluate the impact of actions
- improve the effectiveness of governors to hold leaders to account.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, members of your senior team, three governors and a representative of the local authority. I examined a range of school documents, including the school improvement plan and self-evaluation, information about the school's use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils

and minutes of meetings of the governing body. I scrutinised documents and information relating to attendance, behaviour and bullying. I also looked at the scheme of work for personal, social, health and careers education. The school's records of how pupils' progress is tracked and the resulting actions were also scrutinised, alongside leaders. Records and information relating to the school's work to assess and improve the quality of teaching were considered, as was a local authority report on the school.

Evidence of the quality of teaching and learning was gathered through observation of lessons and scrutinising pupils' work. I met with pupils, both formally and informally at breaktime. I considered the 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

I checked the school's records in relation to the safe recruitment of staff, which meet current requirements.

Main findings

Leaders have not taken effective action to improve outcomes for pupils rapidly. Although there is evidence that pupils' outcomes have improved since the inspection in May 2017, there is variation between subjects, and disadvantaged pupils still do significantly less well than other pupils nationally. Leaders' plans and actions are not rigorous enough to bring about accelerated improvement in pupils' outcomes.

Leaders are not effectively addressing all the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. The school improvement plan is not helpful in supporting this work. It does not include precise enough targets and it does not identify which leader is responsible for each action or when the action is to be completed. Similarly, there is an absence of checkpoints along the way for each action, so it is impossible for leaders to monitor and evaluate how things are going. Leaders do not systematically review and update the school improvement plan.

Governors have little working knowledge of the school's improvement plans and acknowledge that they have no role in their development. Furthermore, they have little involvement in reviewing the school's self-evaluation. Consequently, governors cannot hold leaders to account for ensuring that the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection are being addressed.

The previous inspection recommended an external review of the use of additional funding used to support disadvantaged pupils. Outcomes for these pupils in the last two years are significantly below the national average. Despite this, leaders did not take prompt action. The review of how leaders use the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is not expected to be commissioned until some time after Easter 2018. Additionally, leaders could not provide any evidence of how the impact of additional funding last year had been evaluated or whether the findings had been used to inform the current plan. The plan has no precise and measurable targets or success criteria with which leaders can monitor and evaluate the impact of this

funding. Overall, this reflects a lack of urgency and understanding by leaders about the necessity of addressing this significant weakness in the school's performance over recent years.

Leaders have implemented a new system for checking the progress of pupils. This enables senior leaders to hold subject leaders to account for the progress pupils make and for ways of supporting those who fall behind. This is having some positive effect on improving achievement because it has made progress and accountability a priority. However, leaders accept that the effect of this system is limited. Although interventions are put in place, leaders do not check from one pupil progress meeting to the next how these interventions are working. Consequently, leaders do not know which actions are having an impact and which ones are not. No one has checked how this new system has been working. As a result, leaders, including governors, have an overgenerous and mistakenly confident view of the robustness of the information provided by the system.

Governors are committed to improving the school. However, they do not challenge leaders effectively about the progress of different groups of pupils. Governors assert that they do so, and can show the pupil performance information received from leaders. However, governors' minutes of meetings show that they do not ask probing questions about the progress of groups of pupils, and do not establish any agreed actions. This is limiting the pace at which improvements are being made.

The quality of teaching is improving, particularly in science, humanities and modern foreign languages. Although an inconsistent picture across subjects remains. Leaders have implemented a number of strategies to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, partly through the improved use of assessment information to plan appropriately challenging lessons. There is also evidence of improved use of questions to deepen and extend pupils' learning. Teachers are making more effective use of the school's marking and feedback policy to help pupils improve their learning and correct mistakes. As a result, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making progress, but it should be stronger and quicker.

Leaders have taken more effective action to address the areas for improvement related to the personal development and behaviour of pupils. As a result, the attendance of all groups of pupils is improving. Rates of persistent absence for all groups are falling. This is the consequence of specific and planned actions, including increasing the size of the school's attendance team.

The implementation of a new behaviour and rewards policy has led to a reduction in the rate of fixed-term exclusion and behaviour incidents. Records of bullying show that the number of incidents is falling, including those relating to homophobic and racist bullying. Pupils confirm that the school is paying more attention to the development of their understanding of fundamental British values, through a revised pastoral and assemblies programme. They report that there are now fewer instances of discriminatory language in school.

External support

The local authority commissioned support for the school. The most recent report provided support for leaders by identifying current strengths and weaknesses in teaching. The report also highlighted the limited effectiveness of the school's plans and the variability in the quality of teaching. Leaders have not responded to the observation about school plans.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Shaw
Her Majesty's Inspector