

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 June 2018

Mrs Caroline Green
Principal
Beaumont Hill Academy
Salters Lane South
Darlington
DL1 2AN

Dear Mrs Green

Special measures monitoring inspection of Beaumont Hill Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 9-10 May 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in December 2017. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the academy monitoring group, the regional schools' commissioner and the director of children's services for Darlington local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- As a matter of urgency, improve the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements by making sure that:
 - all checks on the suitability of staff are in place and the school's central record of checks is complete and meets Department for Education requirements
 - pupils' behaviour, including the use of physical restraint, is managed safely and effectively.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by making sure that:
 - leaders and governors have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the school's work, especially the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the management of pupils' behaviour
 - leaders and governors closely monitor the impact of additional funding on the attendance and achievement of disadvantaged pupils and use this information to secure and sustain improvement in the outcomes they achieve.
- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate the progress pupils make, especially disadvantaged pupils and those who have social, emotional and mental health needs, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information to plan learning activities which are closely matched to pupils' interests and levels of ability
 - teachers check whether pupils are working productively on tasks which secure, develop and deepen their knowledge and skills and, if not, provide additional help or more challenging work
 - teaching assistants provide the consistent high-quality help and support pupils need to make fast progress in their learning.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 9 May 2018 to 10 May 2018

Evidence

This monitoring inspection took place over two days. The inspector focused on all areas for improvement identified at the time of the inspection in January 2017. The inspector held meetings with the principal and deputy principal, a group of middle leaders, a group of staff and a group of pupils. The inspector also held discussions with the chief executive of the Education Village Academy Trust (EVAT) and representatives of the academy monitoring group (AMG), the interim local governing body. A meeting was held with Darlington local authority's education safeguarding officer. The inspector also carried out short observations of learning with senior leaders. The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation plan, pupils' work and minutes from meetings of the AMG and board of directors. The inspector also scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, including records of physical interventions by staff and of pupils' misbehaviour.

Context

School leaders have appointed several new staff members including two new teaching staff in the main school and three new support staff in the Stephenson building. The assistant principal with responsibility for safeguarding has returned to work after maternity leave. The number of pupils educated in the Stephenson Centre (the school's provision for pupils who have an education, health and care plan for their social, emotional or mental health difficulties) has continued to reduce. The atmosphere in the unit is now calm and orderly. A public consultation on future admissions to the unit has been concluded with the local authority. The outcome of the consultation is that the school has been directed to continue to offer provision for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) until other provision can be identified within the local authority.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The leadership team remains enthusiastic and positive as it continues to move the school forward. Their unrelenting focus on improvement is evident in the continuous improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed since the previous monitoring visit. The AMG is now functioning effectively as a governing body. These governors have a wide and relevant set of skills, and the minutes of governors' meetings show clearly that they regularly challenge school leaders to bring about improvement at a fast pace. Members of the AMG are regular visitors to the school. They are beginning to form stronger relationships with parents and carers, although school leaders and governors accept that there is more to be done in this area.

Checks on the recruitment of staff are rigorously carried out and are, after one or two minor adjustments, in line with the requirements of the Department for

Education.

Safeguarding pupils remains a high priority in school. The two specialist safeguarding professionals, one from the local authority and one from the Local Safeguarding Children Board, remain active members of the AMG and regularly hold leaders to account by closely monitoring safeguarding processes and procedures in the school.

Overall, incidents of difficult behaviour are reducing as evidenced by the greatly reduced use of physical intervention recorded in the school's safeguarding records. This could be seen clearly in the calm behaviour pupils demonstrated in the corridors and classrooms during the inspection.

Pupils spoken to said that they feel very safe in school. In line with comments made in the report from the previous monitoring visit, pupils would like more opportunity to mix with other pupils who attend schools within the Education Village. Leaders have taken this into account and are working to improve integration between pupils who attend the different schools.

Middle leaders are beginning to develop into their roles and the impact of some of their work is beginning to be felt in areas across the school. For example, the introduction of a whole-school English scheme by the English coordinator has improved literacy levels in some areas of the school. However, senior leaders are aware that, while much good work is carried out by middle leaders, more needs to be done to bring about improvement at a faster pace.

The chief executive of the education trust continues to support senior leaders and to offer effective challenge in the school's journey, out of a category of concern.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Senior leaders have a very clear focus on continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. The impact of leaders' high expectations and rigorous monitoring are beginning to bring about improvement in many areas. However, there remain pockets of inconsistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in some areas. For example, school leaders have put in place training for teaching assistants; however, the quality of work carried out by teaching assistants is not consistently good. While some elements of strong practice were observed, sometimes teaching assistants did too little to promote pupils' independence when learning. Leaders are aware of this and are continuing to tackle this issue.

Visits to the classrooms carried out during the inspection showed that staff know pupils well and the work that is set matches their needs closely. This is increasing pupils' progress overall.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' attendance has improved since the last monitoring visit and is now just above that recorded for other special schools. This rise is the result of a successful campaign carried out by senior leaders with the support of attendance officers, other school staff and external agencies. Parents now recognise the importance of regular attendance for their children and, overall, have a more supportive approach to working with school to increase the attendance of their children.

Pupils spoken to described how staff understand their needs. Comments such as 'I feel I belong here' and 'I enjoy coming to school for the first time that I can remember' reflect pupils' growing self-esteem and improved well-being.

Behaviour has also improved since the previous monitoring visit. This is evidenced by a reduction in the number of incidents of difficult behaviour logged. Further evidence of improvement can be seen in the drop in the number of days pupils have been excluded from school, from 109 days last year to 34 this year. Leaders are clearly pleased with this reduction in days lost by pupils from school. However, leaders recognise that further improvement is needed in this area.

Outcomes for pupils

Currently, pupils are making faster progress in mathematics than in English. Stronger progress is also being made in key stages 1, 2 and 4 than in key stage 3. Leaders are aware of this and have put in place improvements to the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 3. For example, in an English lesson observed during the inspection, pupils were learning about Macbeth. Despite the high level of need of many of the pupils, the teacher's high expectations ensured that this group developed an understanding of the individual characters within the play. The most able pupils also gained a clear understanding of the meaning of 'soliloquy' and sought to use it as part of their explanations of the actions of different characters. The deputy principal has taken into account advice offered at the time of the last monitoring visit and has refined the data collected by school and analysed it more closely. This has shown that disadvantaged pupils are making similar progress to that of others and that targets set in key stage 1 need further refinement in order to offer sufficient challenge to pupils, particularly the most able.

External support

Leaders continue to seek support from external partners including a school improvement partner. However, there has been a recent change in the leaders' approach to seeking support from others. Previously, the school leadership team sought and welcomed support from a wide variety of different sources. Leaders now are becoming increasingly focused on refining support and ensuring that it has a clear focus on bringing about further improvement.