

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Kati Roughley
Headteacher
E-ACT Blackley Academy
Victoria Avenue
Blackley
Manchester
M9 0RD

Dear Mrs Roughley

Short inspection of E-ACT Blackley Academy

Following my visit to the school on 14 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your passion for learning, and commitment to ensure that you provide rich experiences for pupils, permeate the school. Your high aspirations are shared by staff and pupils.

Parents and carers spoken with during the inspection, and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, were very positive about the school. Parents feel valued and part of the school community. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities praised the help they have received. A parent who spoke with me said, 'Staff go above and beyond to help. I can't thank them enough.'

Pupils are extremely polite and courteous towards each other. Their positive attitudes to learning and strong relationships contribute to the good progress they make. Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously as peer mediators, members of committees and house captains. They are excellent role models for younger pupils. Pupils appreciate the many clubs they are able to attend, either at lunch time or after school, such as football and street dance. They talk enthusiastically about visitors to the school and outdoor trips. Pupils are proud of their school. They feel listened to and valued. Pupils commented, 'We are different people from different cultures and that's what makes us all special.'

You and the staff have tackled effectively the areas for improvement from the last inspection. You have established a culture of professional dialogue. Staff receive

training to update their skills and knowledge. Staff work with other colleagues to share their ideas and expertise, including with colleagues in other schools within the trust. This is particularly helpful for staff new to teaching.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers' assessments are accurate and they use this information effectively to ensure that learning activities are well matched to the needs and interests of pupils. Leaders use the information they gather about pupils' progress effectively. For example, pupils who are struggling are identified quickly and receive the guidance and support that they need to catch up.

Members of the board of governance have the skills, knowledge and expertise to hold leaders to account. They triangulate the information they receive from leaders to ensure that the actions that leaders take are improving outcomes for pupils. This is particularly so for the most able pupils in mathematics at the end of key stage 2. However, the proportion of pupils working at a greater depth in reading is not high enough. We looked in more detail at the improvements you have made to the early years provision during the inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding arrangements are understood by staff, as a result of the high-quality training they receive. Staff are kept up to date on relevant safeguarding issues and they identify any vulnerable pupils quickly. Leaders work very effectively with other agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive appropriate guidance and support.

Pupils say they feel safe at school and know there is an adult in the school they can talk with, should they have concerns or worries. They understand the different forms bullying can take. They speak confidently about how teachers deal quickly and effectively with any incidents of bullying and help pupils to make the right choices about how they behave towards others. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through a variety of different activities, including visits from national charities. They understand how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I looked at several key lines of enquiry. The first was about attendance. For the majority of pupils, attendance has remained above the national average for the past three years. However, there are a small number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. You know the families well and staff swiftly follow up when pupils are absent. Staff work to build trust and develop positive relationships with families. Staff work closely with a number of outside agencies and charities to ensure that families receive the guidance and support they need. You have introduced initiatives to improve attendance, for example the 'walking bus' and the breakfast club. Pupils know it is important to attend school every day because it has a positive impact on the progress they make. Overall attendance continues to improve, including for pupils who have

been persistently absent in the past. However, attendance for these pupils still remains below the national average.

- We discussed the provision in place for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Following a review of the provision within the school, you appointed a new lead for overseeing the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Leaders know the pupils and their families well and are very knowledgeable about individual pupils' needs, including those of pupils who have medical needs. Leaders gather evidence from a range of sources, including observations, pupils' work and talking with parents. They work with other professionals and colleagues within the trust to share expertise and to access training and resources. Skilled staff provide the support and guidance pupils need by working with them in small groups or individually. Positive relationships with families and other agencies ensure that pupils receive the additional help they need. Detailed records show that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making at least the progress expected of them from their starting points.
- Next we looked at the actions you have taken to tackle the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils, and to ensure a higher proportion reach the standard expected nationally by the end of key stage 1. Leaders have identified accurately barriers to learning, for example pupils' social and emotional development and limited opportunities outside school. You and the staff establish positive relationships with potentially vulnerable families. Staff work with agencies and other professionals to support these pupils and their families effectively. You ensure that pupils and their families have access to a wide variety of experiences which enhance pupils' learning and promote high aspirations.
- Leaders provide training for staff so they support pupils' social and emotional development effectively. Staff foster positive relationships within a nurturing environment. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute to the improving progress they make. Teachers use assessment information effectively. Consequently, learning activities meet pupils' abilities accurately and with appropriate levels of challenge. Teachers identify pupils who are struggling and ensure that they have the help they need to catch up quickly. The school's assessment information shows an increasing proportion of disadvantaged pupils are on track to reach the standard expected nationally at the end of key stage 1. A higher proportion of these pupils are working at a greater depth, particularly in mathematics.
- We also discussed the actions you have taken in order to improve outcomes for children in the Reception Year. The vast majority of children start school with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. Leaders have accurately identified the barriers to children's learning. Leaders have developed a range of well-thought-out initiatives for children and their families. They share ideas and information about how parents can help to prepare their child for learning. Children settle quickly in a calm and nurturing environment, with well-established routines in the early years setting.

- Leaders understand how young children learn. Teachers use assessment information to identify the next steps in children's learning. Children thrive in the exciting learning environment you have created. Carefully crafted learning ignites children's imagination. Staff use the outdoor area effectively to enhance learning for children. Teachers require children to apply, practise and refine their skills. For example, a group of children were repairing cars in the garage area. Children worked together cooperatively, taking turns and helping each other to repair the large vehicles. Skilled staff used questions effectively to encourage children to talk about the words they wanted to write as they checked the vehicles in for repair and recorded what they had done to fix them.
- Children used their phonics skills confidently, and with increasing accuracy, to write ideas down. The positive relationships fostered in the Reception Year contribute to the good progress children make. An increasing proportion of children are on track to achieve a good level of development by the end of the academic year. However, some children join the Reception Year without having attended a nursery. They join with skills below those of other children nationally and do not always make the accelerated progress needed in order to reach the good level of development necessary for them to be well prepared for Year 1.
- Finally, we looked at the actions you have taken to improve the way in which reading is taught. Your detailed analysis accurately identified that the key barriers were pupils' lack of knowledge of vocabulary and ability to infer meaning from what they read. Leaders have developed an environment that encourages reading. Information sessions and workshops for parents are well attended. Parents are developing the skills and knowledge that they need to help their children at home. Teachers carefully select texts which link to wider areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 6 are studying the story of 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas'. Pupils with whom I spoke said their work in history enables them to have a deeper understanding of the context of the book they are reading.
- Leaders have ensured that staff have the skills and knowledge they need to meet pupils' needs effectively. Teachers use a range of reading assessments accurately to identify the precise gaps in pupils' learning. Learning activities accurately match the needs of the pupils. Skilled staff work with pupils who are struggling with their reading skills to ensure that they receive the help they need to catch up quickly. Leaders monitor the impact of these sessions to ensure that they are having a positive impact on the progress pupils make. The majority of pupils are on track to reach the standard expected for their age by the end of the academic year. However, only a very small proportion of pupils are working at a higher standard.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve attendance for pupils who are persistently absent from school

- they develop further the activities provided in the early years for children and families, so a higher proportion of children reach the good level of development which would prepare them well for Year 1
- they further accelerate the progress pupils make in reading so a higher proportion is working at greater depth by the end of key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other members of the leadership team and staff. I also spoke with members of the board of governance. I visited classrooms with you, where I had the opportunity to speak with pupils and look at their work. I met with a group of pupils formally during the day, and I spoke with a number of parents at the start of the school day. I took into account 41 responses to the staff questionnaire. I also considered 17 free-text comments and the 20 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised pupils' assessment information and a range of documentation, including the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding procedures and practices.