

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



4 July 2018

Mr Julian Leader
Headteacher
George Pindar School
Moor Lane
Eastfield
Scarborough
North Yorkshire
YO11 3LW

Dear Mr Leader

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of George Pindar School

Following my visit to your school on 27 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in June 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, members of the interim executive board (IEB) and a representative of the local authority. I also met with a group of pupils to discuss their learning and we both carried out joint observations in lessons.

The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated in addition to a range of external reports of governance and the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. I scrutinised a range of documents, including reports to the IEB, pupil progress information, behaviour and attendance records and senior leaders' evaluations of the school's work.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the Department for Education issued the school with an academy order. The Hope Learning Trust (HLT) is currently carrying out due diligence in this regard and expects to officially sponsor the school in January 2019.

An IEB has replaced the previous governing body. A new assistant headteacher with responsibility for disadvantaged pupils has taken up post in September 2017. Additional staff have been appointed to manage internal exclusions in the 'seclusion' room and a further non-teaching pastoral manager has recently joined the school.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Following the previous inspection, you used the areas for improvement as a basis for the school's future improvement activities. You rightly focused your attention on developing teachers' skills and understanding by introducing weekly training sessions for all staff, in addition to new 'teaching and learning communities' where staff share ideas and learn from each other. Leaders reviewed the curriculum model, the target-setting process for pupils and the assessment policy, and a vast array of other aspects of the school's work were either refined or replaced. As a result, you are beginning to see improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes.

At 18 pages in length, your 'post-Ofsted action plan implementation strategy' document forms the basis for school improvement. Leaders are assigned a number of actions in order to complete, monitor or evaluate progress over time. The aims and objectives of the plan each have a considerable number of actions assigned to them. For example, the first objective within the plan (Raising teachers' expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve so that learning proceeds at a good pace) has 35 actions assigned to a range of different leaders and teaching staff across two sections of the improvement plan. You and other leaders review the plan every three weeks. However, you acknowledged that leaders' checks are centred on the completion of each action rather than the success criteria. This, in addition to a lack of precision, means that the action plan does not support aspects of the school's work as well as it could.

Prior to the previous inspection, you completed a review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved. However, this review is now largely redundant, as the vast majority of governors have left to be replaced by an IEB. Members of the IEB are highly skilled individuals who bring a wealth of educational experience to the school. They quickly familiarised themselves with the most urgent issues and know that there is still much work to do. Each member of the IEB is linked with a member of the senior leadership team so that they are able to keep abreast of the latest developments in school. This has ensured that leaders are far more accountable for their work. Members of the IEB do not accept information from leaders readily. They ask leaders for further details if they are not satisfied with the information provided. The IEB has, at times, been frustrated by a lack of clarity in some of the evidence of impact leaders have presented to them. In our discussions, you and I both agreed that information could be presented to the IEB in a more succinct way to ensure that members can quickly evaluate the work of leaders.

The school's own attendance information indicates that the proportion of pupils who are absent or persistently absent is improving marginally this year. This is because you have increased the number of staff who work in the attendance team and appointed a dedicated support worker to liaise with the most vulnerable pupils and their families. In addition, you have introduced weekly attendance meetings and action plans for pupils with below-average attendance. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are absent or persistently absent continues to be much higher than their peers and other pupils nationally.

The previous inspection reported stated that: 'Pupils' behaviour is inadequate and requires urgent improvement. Too many pupils are excluded from school, especially disadvantaged pupils.' Unfortunately, this is still the case. The school's own behaviour records indicate that, so far this year, 522 fixed-term exclusions have been issued, compared to 482 in the same period last year. Disadvantaged pupils account for 61% of all exclusions. Furthermore, leaders have issued 200 days of internal exclusions so far this year, compared to 199 in the same period last year. School records highlight that the most common reason for exclusion is 'persistent disruptive behaviour'. In my discussions with pupils, they spoke with sadness regarding the negative impact other pupils' poor behaviour has on their own learning. One pupil said, 'I can't concentrate (in lessons) and I am at the point where I am giving up now.' During our observations in lessons, we both witnessed pupils displaying less positive attitudes to their learning, including in science lessons. Furthermore, pupils report that a considerable amount of learning time is lost because teachers spend a disproportionate amount of time with some pupils who continue to disrupt the learning of others. The pupils with whom I spoke formally agreed that, in their opinion, leaders are too quick to introduce new behaviour management policies when pupils' behaviour does not improve. One pupil lamented that she wished 'teachers would just stick to their plans'.

You have successfully managed to access a wide range of support to help develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in school. In addition, you and other senior leaders have ensured that teachers use pupils' prior assessment information more effectively when they are planning their lessons. In this way, pupils now receive learning activities that are more closely matched to their needs. However, you acknowledge that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve continue to be inconsistent. Pupils agree that, in some lessons, they are challenged much more than in others. In our observations in lessons, we agreed that the most able pupils were given clear instructions and learning activities that developed a deeper understanding of the topic and they were trusted to work independently for extended periods. In other lessons, pupils who enter the school with lower attainment were not challenged sufficiently. Some pupils we spoke to in science were unsure of what they were doing or why. Consequently, some less-able pupils make weaker progress because some of the tasks and activities they complete do not sufficiently develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Leaders at all levels have benefited from an increasing number of professional development opportunities. The senior leadership team has been strengthened by the introduction of a new assistant headteacher with responsibility for the progress and development of disadvantaged pupils – a key area for improvement in the previous inspection report. Staff have formed successful partnerships and links with colleagues from HLT. In preparation for the move to academisation, key staff from HLT have attended leadership meetings or met with teachers to aid with the introduction of consistent ways of working or new policies and procedures that match those of other schools within the trust. Your staff are enthusiastic in their praise regarding this early partnership work and they say that it is having a positive effect on their ongoing work.

In the last inspection, you were asked to undertake an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding. This was completed in November 2017. The recommendations from this review acted as a starting point for the new assistant headteacher. He has enthusiastically raised the profile of disadvantaged pupils in the school so that all teachers are clear who the disadvantaged pupils are and what they need to do to get the most from each pupil. Consequently, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are beginning to improve.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that school plans are precise and their checks on progress assess more accurately the impact of each action. Progress against this additional priority will be evaluated at the next monitoring inspection and reported in the monitoring report.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott
Her Majesty's Inspector