

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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27 September 2018

Mrs Claire Hall  
Headteacher  
Briscoe Lane Academy  
Briscoe Lane  
Newton Heath  
Manchester  
M40 2TB

Dear Mrs Hall

### **Short inspection of Briscoe Lane Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 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 September 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection because you have implemented some far-reaching changes at Briscoe Lane to secure this position. In a relatively short period since your appointment in 2017, you have identified the school's key priorities and put appropriate plans in place to address them. Well supported by the expertise of trust leaders, including the executive principal, you have established a clear vision for the direction of the school, and have introduced a new curriculum and a new approach to managing pupils' behaviour. You and the governors restructured the leadership team and managed significant staffing changes to ensure that these initiatives would embed over time. The changes have resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and learning as well as in the behaviour of pupils.

Since the last inspection, you have successfully tackled previously identified areas for improvement. Inspectors asked leaders to strengthen the quality of leadership and management. The new leadership team have introduced a more rigorous system of performance management where staff targets are linked to the progress that pupils make. You facilitate regular meetings with teachers to discuss the progress of pupils at an individual level to ensure that they have the highest expectations for pupils' achievement.

Inspectors also asked leaders to ensure that teachers plan tasks that stretch the abilities of all pupils, especially the most able. A key feature of the school is your innovative approach to the curriculum, which was designed by the executive principal and introduced in 2017. You have given careful thought to the best ways to motivate the pupils of Briscoe Lane and help them to learn. Teachers provide pupils with a wide variety of opportunities to extend their learning across a range of subjects. For example, pupils explore the

journeys of inspirational characters from literature and history and consider what made them special. They have opportunities to apply the skills learned in mathematics and English lessons as they build knowledge across the curriculum. You have placed strong emphasis on simultaneously improving the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics to ensure that pupils are well prepared for secondary school. These changes are having a positive effect on outcomes at the end of Year 6. In 2018, a higher than average proportion of pupils met the expected standard in reading and mathematics, and writing results were similar to the national average. However, you are not complacent and recognise that some areas of the curriculum need further development, including modern foreign languages and information and communication technology. Plans to address these areas are already under way.

Pupils and most parents and carers told me that, since your appointment, behaviour has improved 'a lot'. The school is now characterised by a calm atmosphere for learning, where pupils treat adults and each other with respect. Pupils are very proud of their school and say it is a happy place where teachers care about them. Key to this success are the seven core values of 'RESPECT' that permeate all aspects of school life and underpin decisions about school policies. Staff teach pupils the importance of resilience, empathy, self-awareness, positivity, excellence and communication. Pupils chosen to be 'Junior Joes' model these behaviours around the school and help other pupils to do the same. Pupils can explain what good behaviour looks like and why it is important to help good learning.

Pupils with challenging behaviour receive good support in learning to regulate their responses. The trust has appointed a specialist team which helps parents and staff to address the individual learning, social and emotional needs of pupils. Initially, there was an increase in the number of pupils excluded due to the higher expectations for behaviour. These pupils were quickly reintegrated into school and are now making good progress.

Leaders are aware that a minority of staff are not yet fully convinced about the changes put into place in the past year. To some extent this is inevitable because of the pace and scale of the changes. However, communication about the reasons for the new behaviour system and how it is applied has not been fully effective.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are in place. Vetting of new staff is thorough. All staff are well trained and receive up-to-date information so that the safety of pupils is always a priority. There are good links with welfare agencies and community services. However, in addition, the trust has appointed its own experienced staff, including a family worker and a social worker, who offer support quickly when it is needed.

Governors bring their own expertise to contribute to safeguarding in the school. A very good knowledge of the local community and a passion for supporting it help school leaders to understand the challenges some pupils face. As a result, staff are able to offer bespoke help and advice to children and families which make a positive difference.

The safety and well-being of pupils are integral to all aspects of the school's work. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and to identify risks, including when online. Pupils and parents confirmed that the school is a safe haven.

### **Inspection findings**

- In the past year, leaders identified the need to improve provision in the early years. Almost all children enter school with skills and abilities below those typically seen nationally and a high proportion demonstrate skills that are well below average. Overall, good teaching is helping them to learn quickly so that outcomes at the end of Reception are improving. However, a lower than average number of children reach a good level of development and very few exceed the early learning goals. The newly appointed early years leader is beginning to have a positive impact. Provision for children to learn and play outdoors has been improved by an exciting range of activities to engage them in role play, mark-making, and physical and creative play. Teaching assistants are used effectively to help children to think carefully when answering questions. Nevertheless, some of the tasks are not demanding enough. For example, children who can already write their name are given activities that do not teach new skills or sounds.
- There is good evidence that the school's focus on improving the quality of pupils' writing across all year groups is working. Both reading and writing skills are taught systematically from the early years upwards. This provides a firm foundation for pupils as they progress through school. There are ample opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills, not only in their English lessons but also in other subjects. For example, Year 6 pupils wrote a diary entry for the French resistance fighter Nancy Wake while exploring her importance during the Second World War. Pupils in key stage 2 are taught how to improve their own writing and are able to share their learning when they swap books to review each other's work. Pupils' books show that they take pride in their written work and that standards are improving.
- These improvements in teaching are raising expectations of what pupils can and should achieve in their writing, especially in key stage 2. The dip in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in 2017 has been reversed. Leaders are rightly focused on embedding these changes to ensure that more pupils achieve the higher standard at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- The school works hard to provide opportunities for disadvantaged pupils. However, in 2017 and 2018, fewer disadvantaged pupils reached the expected or higher standard than others in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. You explained that the school has expanded significantly in recent years, with some pupils arriving outside the normal admissions cycle. This means that they have had less time to benefit from the effective support the school offers. Leaders recognise that for some pupils, lack of self-esteem and confidence hold them back in their learning. Therapies utilising drama and music are used to support individuals and have brought positive results, especially in pupils' emotional well-being. All pupils in the school are offered a free breakfast, school uniform and all the equipment they need so that they are ready to start the school day. Leaders also ensure that there are no financial impediments to pupils attending school trips and after-school clubs. These actions help to reduce barriers to learning for pupils.

- The progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is carefully monitored by staff and reported upon regularly. This information feeds into meetings with leaders and influences actions taken to help pupils who fall behind or have gaps in their learning, for example through extra teaching time. By the end of Year 6, the difference between outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those of others is minimal.
- The school's decision to focus on improving attendance in 2017 was a sound one. Attendance rates have been below national averages for three years. The number of pupils who were persistently absent was double that of all schools nationally in 2016 and 2017. With your support, the newly appointed attendance officer has introduced a series of measures to help parents and pupils recognise the importance of good attendance. He has worked very hard to improve relationships with parents, including being a visible presence on the playground each day. Good attendance is rewarded and promoted prominently around the school and through the newsletter. Parents and staff receive information about the attendance of individual pupils. Extensive support is put in place for pupils whose attendance dips. However, although there are early signs of improvement, most of these measures are recent and the impact of the changes is not seen in the school's attendance data.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children in the early years are challenged even further so that a greater proportion reach and exceed a good level of development by the end of Reception
- they continue to raise expectations and accelerate pupils' progress, so that more pupils achieve the higher standards, particularly in writing, at the end of key stages 1 and 2
- they eliminate the higher than average absence rates and continue to work with parents so that fewer pupils are persistently absent
- plans and policies are communicated clearly and effectively so that the good work being done, for example on improving pupils' behaviour, is understood and even better supported by parents and staff.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Parkinson  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, the executive principle and some subject leaders. I met with the school's attendance officer and administrative officer. I spoke with the chief executive officer of the trust and the school improvement partner. I met with members of the trust and the governing body, including the chair. I visited several classes with you to observe teaching and learning. Together with some teachers, I looked at pupils' work. I met with a group of pupils from across the school. There was only one response to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 1 free-text response. I took account of the views of parents that I met on the playground at the end of the school day. I considered the 26 responses from staff to the Ofsted online questionnaire. I also considered the school's own information from parents' and pupils' surveys. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan. I viewed information about pupils' attainment and progress. I scrutinised the safeguarding documents and I undertook a review of the school's website.