

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



1 October 2018

Mrs Helen Winn
Principal
Ipswich Academy
Braziers Wood Road
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP3 0SP

Dear Mrs Winn

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ipswich Academy

Following my visit to your 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 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. It has taken place because prior to the school's recent section 5 inspection in October 2016 when it was judged as requires improvement, it was deemed to require special measures.

Senior leaders and the multi-academy trust (MAT) are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to check and demonstrate the impact of:

- recently introduced procedures and approaches to improve attendance
- the school's work to ensure that underperforming groups make good progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leaders, the MAT's chief executive officer with another representative of the trust, a group of pupils, and members of staff having responsibilities in areas such as careers and attendance, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with a group of newly and recently qualified teachers and other staff new to the school. I evaluated your school action plan. Together, we made short visits to several lessons, covering

English, mathematics, science, physical education and art. We observed the school at change of lessons.

Context

Your school is part of the Paradigm Trust. You took up post as principal in July 2017 after two terms as interim principal. As of January 2018, your newly appointed senior leadership team comprises the principal and five assistant principals.

Main findings

You, senior leaders and leaders of the MAT have a clear vision for pupils' effective academic and broader education. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. A consistent approach to the delivery of lessons is apparent across the school. Year 11 pupils consider this to be one of the major improvements in recent years. Inexperienced and new staff are supported very well and speak enthusiastically about your clear and straightforward school policies. Staff training is planned carefully and is rightly moving from whole-school training to staff development that is more closely aligned to the subjects that they teach. The MAT trains its own teachers, and new and recently qualified teachers are positive about this training.

Behaviour has been transformed. Your school is a calm place where disruption is rare. Pupils appreciate the increased and consistent expectations for their behaviour. You recognise that exclusions have been too high and have reformed the sanctions policy so that pupils spend time in school. In the summer term 2018, the number of exclusions was half that of the summer term 2017. Pupils speak appreciatively of the accessibility of teachers to give extra support academically and pastorally. Relationships between leaders, staff and pupils ensure a highly productive atmosphere for learning and a positive ethos around the school.

You and your leaders are working hard to reduce the number of absences, which have been too high. There has been a step change in the rigour in identifying and addressing the factors leading to low attendance. This work was accelerated from Easter 2018, and while initial signs are promising, it is too soon to see sustained impact. Improvements in the quality of teaching and the curriculum offered have helped reduce absence.

Pupil outcomes have improved. Overall progress in from Years 7 to 11 in summer 2017 was in line with pupils nationally. It is too soon in the year to judge similar progress for 2018. A legacy of underachievement has led to pupils too often being behind where they should be in their learning, and teachers having to plug gaps in their knowledge and understanding. This led to overall attainment in the 2018 GCSE examinations being mixed. For example, pupils attained well in English but less well in mathematics. Pupils with high attainment on entry did very well. Leaders have identified groups who made insufficient progress, notably disadvantaged middle-ability pupils and girls who lack confidence. Leaders are working towards finding the best ways to raise the achievement of these groups of pupils. Your school's

progress information suggests that lower year groups who have had less of their education associated with poor provision are making even better progress. You, your leaders and teachers are very clear on the need to develop pupils' ability to recall and build on previous knowledge. This is reflected in classroom practice, giving pupils a firm foundation for making progress.

You have maintained a broad curriculum at key stage 3 and at key stage 4. A wide range of courses meet the needs and interests of pupils and enable them to achieve well in their chosen options. Leaders share a belief that pupils of all abilities have an entitlement to a full curriculum. For example in English, all ability sets study, to different depth, the same texts. Historical information shows too few pupils proceeding to further education or training after Year 11. In response to this, you have invested well in careers guidance and there is effective provision to prepare pupils for further education, training and employment.

External support

The MAT has responded to the improved performance of the school. It has contributed to the appointment and training of new staff. Work with external agencies such as the local authority and other local schools is helping to improve attendance.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of the MAT, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector