

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Lucy Harrison
Headteacher
The Archer Academy
Eagans Close
London
N2 8GA

Dear Ms Harrison

Short inspection of The Archer Academy

Following my visit to the school with Nasim Butt, Her Majesty's Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. We visited the school to gather further evidence following a visit by two Ofsted Inspectors. This was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

At the previous inspection in 2015, there were pupils in Years 7 to 9 at the school. Since then, leaders have successfully managed the introduction of key stage 4, which involved the opening of a second campus. As the school has grown, leaders have been highly successful in employing and developing new staff and subject leaders. All leaders work exceptionally well together.

Leaders know the school well and have a deep understanding of its strengths and priorities for further improvement. Leaders at all levels, including governors, have a firm grasp on managing improvements and are taking the right actions to move the school forward. As a result, there is much to celebrate about the impact of leaders' work. Staff morale is high and pupils are extremely positive about the school.

You and your staff have the highest expectations of yourselves and of pupils. Teachers and subject leaders make full use of the opportunities that you give them to develop their leadership and teaching skills. This has been one of the main reasons why the school shows such strong improvement. Subject leadership is a significant strength of the school.

The responses to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents and carers, were overwhelmingly positive. In particular, parents are pleased with the progress that their children make. They value the pastoral care given and feel that their children have grown in confidence since joining the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Referrals to the local authority and external agencies, where necessary, are made promptly and followed up to make sure that children are kept safe. Leaders' written records of their discussions and decisions, while adequate, occasionally lack detail.

Safeguarding has a high profile in the school. Leaders ensure that training is up to date so that staff and governors understand the latest statutory guidance. Pupils typically feel safe in school. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils, including those who have complex needs, to learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, on a recent visit, the police gave a talk about knives and gangs. Pupils said that bullying is rare, and the school's records show that occasional instances are followed up effectively. Pupils know which adults to go to if they ever need any help. Pupils told inspectors that they know how to keep themselves safe, for example when online.

Inspection findings

- During the initial inspection in July and our visit in October, inspectors explored how successfully leaders are improving outcomes for the most able and for disadvantaged pupils. This was because these are two of the largest groups of pupils. For example, approximately 50% of pupils in each year group are most able.
- Leaders have put in place a highly appropriate curriculum, including for most-able pupils. Subject leaders and teachers think carefully about how to organise subject content and how to challenge pupils in their thinking. Teachers set most-able pupils work that is well matched to their abilities. For example, in Year 9 art and technology, pupils are confident in using subject-specific terms accurately. They use their prior knowledge from Year 8 to talk about why they select and apply certain techniques and materials in their new projects. One most-able pupil commented: 'What this school does well is to challenge us.' This view was echoed by many pupils. Pupils also spoke about 'honours thinking'. This is another of your school's strategies that challenges pupils to tackle more difficult work. Overall, teaching for most-able pupils is highly effective in ensuring that they successfully learn to think more deeply about the subject content that they are being taught.
- Reviews of work, the school's records and evidence from talking to pupils all combine to show that most-able pupils make substantial progress across the curriculum. They also benefit from and appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including art, music, dance, drama and sports, that you and

the school's leaders organise.

- You and your leaders have an extremely clear understanding of how effectively you spend the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders evaluate the impact of their chosen strategies carefully. They leave no stone unturned in looking at how to meet pupils' needs. For example, some disadvantaged pupils benefit from personalised support programmes, including sessions with mathematics specialists, that encourage stronger progress.
- Teachers know their pupils well. Subject leaders and teachers carefully check the progress disadvantaged pupils make. Overall, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is consistently strong. However, you have identified correctly that, across the school, boys from disadvantaged backgrounds who have weak literacy skills make less progress than other pupils in some subjects. You have strategies in place to ensure that disadvantaged boys receive additional support. This support is helping them to develop their reading and writing and is already strengthening their progress further.
- We also looked at the school's work to improve the impact of subject leaders within their areas of responsibility. This was an area for improvement at the time of the last inspection.
- Since the previous inspection, your investment in training and support has made a real difference to the effectiveness of subject and pastoral leaders. These groups of leaders said that they are listened to, supported and held to account for their work. They routinely check the quality of teaching and particularly the progress made by most-able and disadvantaged pupils.
- Subject leaders have a secure understanding of their subject areas and use this knowledge to sustain further improvements. They regularly share with each other examples of what is working well, including during 'Flash Friday' training sessions and during 'teacher learning communities' meetings.
- The school's approach to assessment at key stage 3 is still relatively new and is becoming more embedded across the school. Working with subject leaders, you have already identified the improvements that you want to make and have captured these well in the school improvement plan.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to reduce the differences in progress between boys from disadvantaged backgrounds and other pupils, particularly by improving their literacy skills
- follow through with their plans to improve how they use assessment information in key stage 3.

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

Yours sincerely

Sam Hainey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The school was initially inspected on 11 July 2018 by two Ofsted Inspectors. On 9 October 2018, we returned to the school to gather further evidence. The evidence gathered over both days was used to inform the inspection outcome. During both visits, inspectors held meetings with you, senior leaders, governors, subject leaders and staff. Inspectors spoke to a representative of Barnet local authority. We met with different groups of pupils. We visited lessons in different year groups across the school and looked at a range of pupils' work. You and senior leaders accompanied us on these visits and/or took part in the reviews of pupils' work. We looked at a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding. We considered the 205 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 41 responses to the staff survey. We also considered correspondence, both in writing and on the telephone, with parents and carers who contacted the inspection team.