

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



26 November 2018

Mr Damian Davey
Head of Primary Academy
The West Grantham Academy St John's
Trent Road
Grantham
Lincolnshire
NG31 7XQ

Dear Mr Davey

Special measures monitoring inspection of The West Grantham Academy St John's

Following my visit to your school on 13 and 14 November 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2017. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Lawson". The script is cursive and fluid.

John Lawson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2017

- Tackle weaknesses in the school's arrangements to protect pupils and keep them safe urgently, by:
 - ensuring that the leaders responsible for this aspect of the school's work have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to carry out their roles effectively
 - ensuring that records of concerns about pupils' well-being are detailed, thorough and properly maintained, so that leaders can be certain that appropriate action is taken to protect the pupils at risk of harm
 - ensuring that school leaders inform the appropriate agencies when pupils who are at risk are identified and that they devise clear systems to make sure that concerns are acted on quickly and effectively
 - tackling aggressive and overly boisterous behaviour and the high incidence of bullying effectively, so that pupils feel safe and protected when they are at school
 - ensuring that the curriculum adheres to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, by promoting tolerance towards people with protected characteristics
 - ensuring that governors maintain proper oversight of the effectiveness of the school's arrangements to safeguard children from harm and to promote tolerance towards others.
- Strengthen all aspects of leadership, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels have the knowledge, skills and understanding to carry out their roles effectively
 - ensuring that roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clear, so that leaders, staff and governors understand precisely who is responsible for what
 - increasing the accuracy of leaders' evaluation of teaching
 - ensuring that rigorous systems are in place to inform the school's own self-evaluation and future school improvement planning.
- Improve outcomes rapidly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, by:
 - ensuring that the additional funding provided to support pupils who have additional needs is allocated to those for whom it is intended, including children who are looked after

- ensuring that the leaders responsible have the knowledge, understanding, skills and authority to carry out their roles effectively
 - strengthening the school's systems for identifying pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they can quickly be given the support that they need
 - tracking the impact of additional spending rigorously, so that leaders have a strong understanding of the difference it is making to pupils' achievement and so that further action can be taken if achievement remains low
 - increasing the impact of teaching assistants in lessons, so that they consistently make a demonstrable contribution to pupils' achievement.
- Improve pupils' attendance, particularly the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school.
 - Ensure that leaders tackle lateness more effectively, so that pupils routinely arrive to school on time.
 - Improve the quality of teaching and thereby improve outcomes for all groups of pupils, including the most able pupils, by:
 - holding teachers to account more effectively for the quality of their teaching and the achievement of the different groups of pupils they teach
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and how pupils should behave
 - improving teachers' skills in adapting learning to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, including least-able pupils, disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and most-able pupils
 - strengthening transition arrangements between the early years and key stage 1, so that the gains children make in the early years are not lost in Year 1
 - equipping teachers with the skills necessary to make effective use of classroom assistants and ensuring that they do so consistently.

An external review of governance should be undertaken, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 13 November 2018 and 14 November 2018

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, teaching assistants and other staff. The inspector met with two members of the board of trustees (hereafter known as the local governing board), spoke with the chair of the board and met with a representative of the local authority. The inspector also met with parents and carers at both sites and with pupils informally during the school day, as well as meeting with a group of pupils. Discussions explored a wide range of subjects, including safeguarding arrangements and evidence in relation to the areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2017.

The inspector observed a total of seven lessons as well as six phonics lessons. Lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and/or senior leaders. During these visits, the inspector looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. The inspector also examined, with school leaders, pupils' work in a sample of their books. The inspector scrutinised a variety of documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' attainment and progress, the work of the governing board, staff performance and leaders' plans for improvement. The range and quality of information provided on the school's website were also considered.

Context

The head of primary academy, who will be referred to here as the headteacher, was appointed to his post in June 2018.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have ensured that the school has continued to improve in most areas since the last monitoring inspection in March 2018. A leadership structure with clearly identified roles and responsibilities is in place. The recently appointed headteacher has galvanised the school team. Leaders and other staff work more cohesively. Staff who spoke with the inspector say that they feel listened to and respected by the new headteacher. Staff say morale has improved. Leaders are bringing about further improvements to the quality of teaching, behaviour and other aspects of the school's work, and are well placed to accelerate improvements. However, the pace of improvement has not been rapid enough in some key aspects of the school's work.

Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance and the school improvement plan is now much more focused compared with the previous monitoring visit.

Leaders are better able to hold staff to account. The management of teachers' performance is more rigorous and closely linked to the plan. Leaders have recently created a timetable of actions to monitor and evaluate the impact of their actions. There is now greater focus, which is helping to speed up the pace of improvements.

Many initiatives have been introduced or further developed. Senior leaders accurately evaluate the quality of teaching. They are incisive in their identification of key strengths and weaknesses. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have continued to improve. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain. Leaders have not been as effective as they could be in ensuring that all staff implement their initiatives. Pupils' progress is still too variable.

Leaders carefully review the progress of individual pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in regular meetings with teachers. They identify what needs to be done to help pupils catch up. Leaders better hold teachers to account for the progress made by different groups of pupils. This information also helps the governing board to hold the school to account more effectively. Leaders are confident that their assessments of pupils' attainment and progress in reading and mathematics are now accurate. However, they have identified that this is still not the case for writing. Leaders have rightly identified this as an important priority for improvement and have put into place a focused programme of staff training.

At the last visit, the inspector identified that leaders had established systems to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly and to track the progress of these pupils. However, provision for pupils with SEND is currently not effective. Leaders have not ensured that appropriate support for some pupils is in place. Pupils with SEND are not making the progress they should. It is crucial that leaders and the trust rapidly improve the provision for these pupils.

Middle leaders have now received training to develop their leadership skills. Roles are now more clearly defined. Many staff have led staff training, and they support staff to improve the quality of teaching. They create improvement plans and are developing their expertise in the ways in which they check that their actions can have a positive impact on improving pupils' outcomes.

At the end of 2018, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was below that of their peers and well below that of pupils nationally at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Leaders have reviewed the impact of the previous funding carefully and now have a far more strategic approach based on their analysis of pupils' needs. The impact of the funding is now more carefully checked. Leaders' use of the pupil premium is now far more considered and focused.

Safeguarding systems and procedures are secure. There is now an effective culture of safeguarding. Leaders have further refined the way they record and analyse concerns brought to their attention. Their detailed records show that they are

tenacious in following up concerns. They persevere to secure the involvement of external agencies where this is relevant. Staff training ensures that staff know the procedures they should follow if they have concerns about pupils' welfare or, for example, to make them aware of the 'Prevent' duty. The governing board visits the school to check that the school is meeting safeguarding requirements.

Pupils have a better understanding of what bullying is, and what to do if they are worried. Leaders' records show that the number of concerns raised about bullying have reduced considerably. Parents who spoke with the inspector said that the school kept their children safe. Parents and pupils are confident that staff will try to resolve any concerns they have.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is improving. Teachers have consistent expectations of pupils' behaviour. They remind pupils of what is expected and use a range of strategies to promote positive behaviour. Teachers ensure clear routines are in place, and classrooms are well organised. Low-level disruption is now rare. Pupils are sensible in lessons and apply themselves well. They are often keen to contribute and answer questions. Relationships between pupils and teachers are positive. Leaders and other staff are creating an ethos of mutual respect. Parents say that teachers are friendly and approachable, and their children enjoy going to school.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge, which they use effectively to question pupils. Displays are a consistent feature of classrooms to support pupils' learning. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are improving. However, sometimes pupils quickly finish work and are unsure what to do next. Sometimes, the least able pupils are given work that is too difficult. Leaders have not ensured that teachers consistently match work well to pupils' needs and abilities, including the most- and least-able pupils. This was identified at the previous visit. The progress of some pupils is not as rapid as it could be.

Leaders have made sure that improving the effectiveness of teaching assistants is now part of the school improvement plan. Teaching assistants are generally effective, particularly when working with individuals and small groups. Sometimes, however, their role in different parts of lessons is less clear. They have not yet received training to further develop their effectiveness. Teachers have not yet had training to further develop their expertise in deploying teaching assistants.

Teachers are more effective in teaching reading and comprehension skills. The teaching of phonics is effective and enables pupils to make progress. Pupils in key stage 2 were enjoying reading 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas' as part of their history topic. Teachers use novels to provide interesting contexts for pupils to learn reading and writing skills, as well as encouraging their personal development.

One teacher, for example, skilfully asked pupils to reflect on events in their own lives that related to a story. This engaged pupils and helped them gain a deeper understanding of the text.

Teachers ensure that pupils practise their writing skills in different subjects. Pupils' presentation of their work is improving. Teachers often plan logical sequences of lessons, so that pupils' learning builds effectively over time. This enables pupils to make good progress. However, this is not consistently evident. Pupils' work shows that they are taught how to assess their own work and that of others. Pupils often use their 'polishing pens' to identify areas they can improve. However, sometimes pupils' errors and misconceptions are not addressed rapidly enough. Pupils are not taught consistently well how to check and improve their work.

In many classes, pupils are often given appropriately challenging work in mathematics, including opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. Sometimes, pupils apply their mathematical skills in different subject areas, such as interpreting graphs and tables in geography. Some teachers promote pupils' fluency and deeper understanding well. However, leaders have not ensured that this is consistent. Pupils' progress in mathematics remains variable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour has continued to improve. The school's behaviour policy has been reviewed. Leaders and other staff now use a far more consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils respond quickly to staff's requests for attention. The school now has a much more calm and orderly atmosphere. School records show that the number of incidents of poor behaviour has reduced. Pupils themselves say behaviour has improved. Leaders have zoned the playground and restructured lunchtimes. Some pupils, however, said they felt there was still some rough play at break- and lunchtimes.

Leaders and other staff have greatly improved the school's physical environment at both school sites. Displays of pupils' work and their learning in different subjects are helping pupils to take greater pride in their work and school. Pupils' work and efforts are praised and valued. Pupils are taught to value their education and learning.

Leaders and other staff's promotion of pupils' personal development is improving. The school's curriculum is having a positive impact on improving pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The inspection took place during an anti-bullying week, in which pupils wore their own clothes in the colours of the re-named school houses. Pupils told the inspector how this built up a team feeling, in which, they said, 'we are all the same, but different.'

Leaders and other staff are creating an aspirational culture, which is helping pupils to have higher ambitions for themselves. Visitors are invited into school to talk

about their occupations. For example, a graphic designer, an author and an electrician have visited the school. A school display shows pupils' aspirations for the future. School clubs, such as the science club, held at a partner secondary school, are promoting pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Staff are raising pupils' aspirations.

Leaders and staff have reviewed the school's approach to the teaching of values. Pupils know and use the school values. Pupils are taught to better understand others and the importance of making responsible choices. Many displays around the school highlight the school's work to promote awareness of British values. However, pupils are still not as secure in their understanding as they should be for their age.

Leaders take a range of concerted actions to pursue improved attendance. They emphasise to parents the importance of their children attending regularly. Displays show the school's attendance targets and attendance is celebrated and rewarded. Leaders analyse attendance information carefully and work closely with families with high persistent absence. Current attendance information shows some improvement, including that of pupils who are disadvantaged, and pupils with SEND. Leaders have been effective in reducing the number of pupils arriving late. However, the figure for overall attendance last year declined compared with the previous year and remains below average. This remains an area of continuing focus.

Outcomes for pupils

Provisional information about the school's performance shows a mixed picture. For the last three years, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in early years has steadily improved and been close to that seen nationally. Transition arrangements between early years and Year 1 are improving. The senior leader, who is also the leader for early years, has ensured that the learning of pupils in Year 1 now builds more effectively on the gains made in early years. At the end of 2018, the proportion of pupils who achieved the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check improved, though it was still below the national average.

The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was similar to that seen nationally. However, while the proportions of pupils achieving this standard in reading and writing improved, these were still well below the national averages. At the end of key stage 2, pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics all declined compared with the previous year, and were also below or well below those seen nationally. At the end of key stages 1 and 2, too few pupils achieved the higher levels. The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils were below those of their peers and well below those of pupils nationally.

As was identified at the previous visit, pupils' current work shows a picture of improving progress. This continues to be the case. Over time, increasing proportions of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress

in reading, writing and mathematics. Handwriting and presentation have improved further. However, pupils' work and the school's information show that pupils' progress, including for those who are disadvantaged, the most and the least able, and those with SEND, is too variable.

External support

The governing board has created a curriculum and standards committee dedicated to providing challenge and support to The West Grantham Academy St John's specifically. Formerly, all schools of the trust jointly attended meetings. This new structure is enabling the governing board to be more effective in its role.

The minutes of its meetings show that the trust is providing greater challenge to leaders. Members of the governing board now ask more focused questions that relate to the areas for improvement in the school improvement plan. The governing board has created a timetable of actions to visit the school and check standards. Members identify key focuses for these visits, which are also linked to the school improvement plan. They are becoming more effective in checking standards and holding leaders to account.

In response to perceived improvements, the local authority has reduced its role. It continues to undertake visits to the school to meet with leaders and monitor the school's performance. School leaders value these visits.