

19 December 2018

Mr Leighton Thomas
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr Thomas

Short inspection of East Birmingham Network Academy

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 2018 with Susan Hickerton, Ofsted Inspector, 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You, your senior leaders and other staff, including the executive headteacher, are very ambitious for pupils. Your vision ('no loss to learning, no pupil left behind, no excuses') is evident in the day-to-day life of the school. You have built on the many strengths identified in the last inspection report. Consequently, the school continues to cater well for pupils who were unsuccessful at their previous school.

Pupils are aged between 13 and 16 years of age. They usually join the East Birmingham Network Academy (EBNA) with a history of poor behaviour and irregular attendance at their previous school. They arrive at different times of the school year after permanent exclusion or having been at risk of permanent exclusion. The number of girls on roll is growing. Many girls have a complex range of medical and other healthcare needs.

A key strength of the school lies in its successful induction programme. When they start at the school, pupils and their families, parents and carers are involved in identifying pupils' specific educational and care needs. At the same time, they are all introduced to 'the EBNA way', which is summed up as, 'very effective teaching in an orderly and safe environment'.

Pupils often lack confidence when they start at the school. This lack of confidence is usually accompanied by negative attitudes to learning. However, the school's

effective approach to improving behaviour, combined with very strong teaching, leads to rapid success in the classroom, more confidence and positive attitudes to learning.

As part of their induction, pupils spend a considerable amount of time learning about the school's expectations and what these mean for them. For example, they are helped to understand how to behave in lessons and how to cope if difficulties arise. This extensive and carefully organised induction programme helps new pupils to settle in quickly and make a very positive start to life at the school.

Pupils and parents are very positive about the quality of education that you provide. Pupils are clear that the school helps them to grow personally and academically. They are appreciative of the support provided and for the opportunity to achieve. Some would welcome access to a greater variety of vocational qualifications.

For a few pupils who do not attend regularly, alternative provision is provided at local colleges and registered training providers. Most pupils in this provision have access to specialist vocational courses. Senior leaders check routinely on the quality of education and care received by these pupils.

Leaders have a very good understanding of the school's considerable strengths and minor shortcomings. They evaluate carefully the impact of actions taken to improve teaching, learning and behaviour. Where required, they act quickly to remedy any weaknesses.

The school is part of a multi-academy trust, which was set up by a partnership of 11 secondary schools in the east of Birmingham. An experienced and skilful local governing body, overseen by an impressive board of trustees, ensures that governance is effective and rigorous. Governors and trustees provide sufficient scrutiny of the school. They are well trained and have exemplary understanding of their roles.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding pupils is taken very seriously by leaders and staff. Pupils feel safe and happy as a result of positive relationships and careful supervision. Pupils learn to behave well. They work safely in lessons. Bullying is rare.

Staff are well trained in keeping all pupils safe. Senior leaders have agreed well-established systems for detecting and reporting safeguarding issues or welfare difficulties. Staff are alert to potential issues in classrooms and around the school. The school site is secure and welcoming, despite its position on a very busy major road. Pupils follow agreed routines in lessons and when moving around the school, which helps to keep them safe.

Safeguarding is well led. Senior leaders review risks to pupils' safety thoroughly and make improvements to systems where needed. They work assiduously with other agencies and escalate issues, or take alternative action, when they do not think that

prompt enough action is being taken.

Staff are appointed only after suitable checks are made. Governors are involved in reviewing safeguarding arrangements, including for pupils' travel arrangements to and from school. Pupils with medical conditions are cared for well. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- As well as safeguarding, we looked at pupils' behaviour and attendance, the extent of improvement to teaching since the last inspection, and the impact of the curriculum and assessment on pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils learn to behave sensibly during their time at the school. Routines for learning are well established. Pupils listen to instructions, usually without fuss, and work productively in lessons for sustained periods of time. Serious misconduct by pupils is infrequent. Teachers and other staff deal with incidents of minor disruption effectively.
- Staff build excellent relationships with pupils and are consistent in their expectations. In turn, pupils know that staff care for them and want them to succeed. Pupils are well supported by their teachers, coaches and other staff. Taken together, these elements form the cornerstone of the school's effective approach to behaviour management.
- Pupils' attendance usually improves once they start at the school, often significantly. Overall attendance levels are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection, including for disadvantaged pupils. A few pupils have serious physical or mental health difficulties, which causes more irregular attendance. The school works effectively with these pupils, alternative providers and families, parents and carers to promote the best possible attendance.
- A new approach to teaching, grounded in recent research into effective practice, has been established throughout the school. Teachers and other staff have benefited from a comprehensive training programme, which focuses on setting clear expectations, building pupils' knowledge and skills, and teaching resilience and perseverance. They use this agreed method of teaching in all lessons, and pupils quickly become familiar with what is expected of them. A strong focus on improving mathematics teaching since the last inspection, including by appointing new staff and refreshing the curriculum, has led to better outcomes for pupils in this subject.
- Year 9 pupils follow a programme of study that includes most subjects of the national curriculum. In addition, pupils benefit from a strong focus on literacy and numeracy, as well as an emphasis on presentation and completion of a good quantity of work. The work habits developed by pupils in Year 9, and the gains they make in knowledge and understanding, prepare them well for the subjects they study in Year 10 and Year 11. The constraints of the building and its surroundings make teaching physical education very difficult.
- In the final two years of school, all pupils study English, mathematics, science and

up to five other academic or vocational options. Nearly all achieve qualifications, from entry level to GCSE at grade 4 or above. On occasions, pupils achieve higher grades at GCSE and go on to study for A levels. However, the choice of academic subject options at GCSE is rather limited because of the building constraints and lack of specialist expertise and resources.

- The school also offers pupils a small number of vocational options, which include health and social care, barbering, hairdressing, and beauty therapy. Pupils who are full time at the school would like to have more choice, so they can study for qualifications in subjects that more closely match their different aptitudes and interests. Those pupils in alternative provision and who do not attend the school full-time have access to a wider variety of vocational courses.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils have the opportunity to study for academic and vocational qualifications that more closely reflect their aptitudes and interests, including by working with other education or training providers.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Cladingbowl
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we observed pupils in lessons. We looked at the work set for them by teachers and spoke to pupils about how well they are doing. We met with staff, including senior leaders, and spoke with three trustees and a representative of the local governing body.

We scrutinised key documents, including the school's own records of pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress. We also considered a range of written information about safeguarding, staff training, behaviour, teaching, assessment and the curriculum.

We examined the school's self-evaluation and minutes of governing body meetings. We met with the leaders responsible for alternative provision and looked at their records. We took account of parents' views gathered by the school. There were no

responses to Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire.