

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Sam Gorse
Headteacher
Turton School
Bromley Cross Road
Bromley Cross
Bolton
Lancashire
BL7 9LT

Dear Ms Gorse

Short inspection of Turton School

Following my visit to the school on 22 January 2019 with Vicky Atherton, Ofsted Inspector, and Kathleen Eccleston, 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and staff have created a calm and supportive community. Pupils appreciate the support they receive from their teachers. Parents and carers are mainly positive about the school. They appreciate the pastoral help provided by staff. You and your leadership team have worked to maintain high-quality pastoral support for pupils, while raising the level of academic challenge for all. To this end, you have increased the focus on what pupils are learning and how well they are learning in each subject area. You also ensure that staff benefit from appropriate training. This is improving the quality of teaching across the school.

You and your senior leadership team have been successful in remedying the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. For instance, inspectors asked you to improve the quality of teaching, especially in French. You have tackled this aspect of the school with quiet determination. You have appointed two new teachers of modern foreign languages. You have also ensured that teachers of this subject benefit from relevant training. You have taken steps to strengthen the leadership of modern foreign languages. Improvements in the quality of teaching mean that a higher proportion of pupils are choosing to study a language at key stage 4.

Leaders in modern foreign languages have overhauled the curriculum in French. This ensures that all teachers are clear about what pupils should be learning.

Teachers plan learning that allows pupils to gain a strong grasp of basic knowledge. Pupils draw on their basic knowledge and vocabulary effectively because teachers check that pupils' learning is secure before they move on. This allows pupils to attempt increasingly challenging activities. Consequently, pupils make good progress in French. For example, those pupils who left the school in 2018 made better progress in this subject than their peers nationally.

You have replicated the steps taken to improve the quality of teaching in French across other subject areas. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers across subject areas are challenging pupils regularly. Teachers are highly effective at using their subject knowledge to provide pupils with careful guidance. Teachers use their questioning skills to support pupils' learning effectively.

At the previous inspection, inspectors also asked you to ensure that students who join the sixth form can cope with the higher-level learning at A level. The proportion of students joining the sixth form from outside Turton School has reduced over time. However, leaders ensure that this small proportion of students can adapt to new surroundings and more challenging courses. This is through improved links between leaders in the sixth form and other local schools.

Students in the sixth form were highly positive about the support they receive from their teachers. They would recommend the sixth form to a friend. Students are particularly complimentary about the help that they receive from their teachers if they fall behind. They explained to inspectors how appropriate support from staff allows them to catch up with their peers. As a result, in nearly all subjects, students in the sixth form make progress in line with students nationally.

There have also been improvements in the quality of teaching in the sixth form. This is particularly the case for those students who did not achieve a standard pass at GCSE in mathematics. As a result, a higher proportion of students improve their mathematics grade than at the time of the previous inspection.

Members of the governing body have an accurate understanding of those areas of the school that require further development. They ask questions of leaders to check on aspects of the school's performance. However, there have been times when governors have not held leaders to account diligently enough, for example for the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and your staff are committed to providing pupils with high-quality pastoral care. The overwhelming majority of parents are confident that pupils are safe in school. Pupils explained to inspectors that they feel safe and that incidents of bullying are rare. They are confident that teachers will deal effectively with any worries or concerns they may have. One group of pupils explained to an inspector how 'teachers help pupils to put things right and restore relationships'.

Leaders ensure that there are robust systems in place to check that adults employed by the school are safe to work with pupils. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. You make sure that their knowledge in this area remains up to date. Staff understand the procedures to follow if they have concerns about a pupil. Leaders work effectively with other agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive appropriate, high-quality support.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about the dangers of local railway lines and the negative effects of drugs and alcohol. Pupils also learn about how to keep themselves safe online. Through the faiths and ethics curriculum, pupils learn about different religions. Pupils show respect and tolerance for their peers whose cultures differ from their own. Those pupils who are members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community feel that they can be open about their sexual and gender identity.

Inspection findings

- I was keen to learn about the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. This is because this group of pupils has underachieved in the past as a consequence of weaknesses in the leadership of this area. The governing body is aware that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is a priority. However, members of the governing body have not held leaders to account diligently enough for their actions in this area.
- More recently, the leadership of this area has been strengthened. Leaders place greater emphasis on identifying the barriers faced by this group of pupils. Consequently, leaders and staff are becoming increasingly effective at helping disadvantaged pupils overcome these barriers. For example, rates of absence for disadvantaged pupils have reduced markedly for the last three years. There has also been a reduction in the proportion of this group of pupils who are excluded from school.
- Following improvements in assessment, leaders can identify disadvantaged pupils who fall behind in their learning. This means these pupils receive appropriate support. For instance, leaders use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils with their reading. This has been effective in improving pupils' literacy skills. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving, particularly at key stage 3. This is because of improvements in the quality of teaching and increasingly effective support for this group of pupils. Nonetheless, there is more to do to ensure that this group make the progress of which they are capable, particularly at key stage 4.
- I was interested to know about the proportion of pupils who are excluded from school for a fixed period. This is because the proportion of pupils excluded from school has been higher than the national average in the past. To improve pupils' behaviour, leaders implemented a different behaviour system, which is having a positive effect. Teachers and pupils are clear about the standards of behaviour expected. As a result, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and they behave well around school. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour during lessons. The proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period has reduced.

Moreover, far fewer pupils are excluded for a second time. This shows that leaders' strategies to improve pupils' behaviour are effective in changing pupils' behaviour for the better.

- I wanted to learn about the curriculum and whether pupils access a broad range of subjects, particularly at key stage 4. Leaders have acted to improve the advice and guidance for pupils about careers. This means that pupils are better informed when choosing subjects at key stage 4. Pupils understand how these choices will affect the range of courses available to them when they leave the school.
- Leaders have given careful thought to the structure of the curriculum. They have worked to clarify the most important knowledge that pupils require in each subject. As a result, subject leaders across the school are very clear about what they want pupils to learn and the order of subject content. Consequently, teachers sequence pupils' learning effectively. In addition, teachers ensure that pupils have a secure grasp of their learning before they move on to more challenging concepts. For instance, in music and drama, teachers build effectively on pupils' prior learning. Consequently, pupils can draw on their prior knowledge and make good progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors hold leaders to account for their actions more diligently, paying more attention to how effectively leaders spend additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils
- they increase the progress made by disadvantaged pupils by addressing individual pupils' barriers to learning, particularly at key stage 4.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Gregory
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors met with you and other senior leaders, a group of teachers, a group of subject leaders and a group of teaching assistants. Inspectors spoke formally with pupils from key stage 3, key stage 4 and students in the sixth form. Inspectors also spoke with pupils during lessons and at social times.

Inspectors observed learning and looked at work produced by pupils and students across a range of subjects. Inspectors spoke with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority.

Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, governance and leaders' analyses of attendance information. Inspectors considered the school improvement plan.

Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff or pupil surveys.