

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



5 March 2019

Miss Anita Frier
Executive Principal
Stoke Damerel Community College
Somerset Place
Stoke
Plymouth
Devon
PL3 4BD

Dear Miss Frier

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stoke Damerel Community College

Following my visit to your school on 14 February 2019, 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.

Senior leaders and the trust are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievements by:
 - challenging consistently the most able pupils in key stage 4 and the most able students in the sixth form to achieve the highest possible grades
 - ensuring that recent improvements in English and mathematics teaching continue and are spread to other subject areas
 - using pupil premium funding effectively to raise disadvantaged pupils' achievement further.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - making sure that learning activities are interesting and stimulating so that pupils are motivated to concentrate and succeed
 - building on the work that has already begun to develop pupils' confidence in their own abilities.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the local governing body keeps a sharp focus on pupils' outcomes
 - providing training for governors to deepen their understanding of information about the performance of groups of pupils in the school
 - developing the accuracy of middle leaders' evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in their departments
 - sharpening the evaluation of the school's use of pupil premium funding.

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.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, the chair of the multi-academy trust, another trustee and the chair of the governing body. I also met with middle leaders and pupils to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I reviewed the improvement plan and scrutinised the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. I visited English and mathematics lessons and looked at pupils' work.

Context

Since the last inspection, one of the vice principals and seven teachers have left the school. New teachers, including a new head of English, assistant vice-principal and head of sixth form, have joined the school. A new chair of governors has been appointed so that the previous chair can focus solely on his role as chair of the multi-academy trust.

Main findings

Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, attained well below what they are capable of in the end of key stage 4 examinations in every EBacc subject. The most able pupils' progress was in the lowest 10% nationally. Students' progress in A-level subjects in their end of key stage 5 examinations was significantly below the national average, as was progress in level 2 examinations in English.

Leaders of teaching and learning provided a coaching model for improvement last year. Although this had some impact on progress, leaders recognise that there has not been enough improvement for a significant minority of teachers. Leaders have planned how to deal with this, but the training has not yet happened. Consequently, there are still some teachers with low expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, some pupils' work is incomplete or of poor quality and includes uncorrected spelling and grammar mistakes.

You and the senior leadership team have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You use the government's teaching standards as the accountability measure for teachers' performance consistently. This is having an impact and, in some cases, teachers who have not met expectations have chosen to leave. The turbulence this causes is demanding of time, and so progress halts or slows. On a positive note, current staffing is more secure. Middle leaders, new and established, are more aware of their role in holding teachers to account. They are keen to work with senior leaders on the improvements necessary to make sure pupils' progress is better.

New, suitably skilled trustees have been appointed. This helps the trust hold leaders and governors to account more stringently. The new chair of governors has attended several training sessions already to help her in her new role. She understands her responsibilities, but having been appointed only recently the impact

so far is limited. This is similar for the new trustees. There has been too much willingness previously to accept the information provided by leaders rather than ask searching questions about the impact of their actions. This is evident from the improvement plans which demonstrate actions taken but not their impact.

Entry requirements for the sixth form are higher this year. Students must achieve at least a grade 6 or above in their GCSE examinations. This means that current students in Year 12 are better prepared for the level of study at A level. It is too soon to know the impact this will have on results. However, the retention of students, so far, has improved.

There is a high number of disadvantaged pupils on roll, nearly half the school population. Leaders had not evaluated the actions taken to improve the progress of this group precisely enough in the past. Plans were too generic and did not focus on the specific barriers affecting these pupils. Current leaders have acted to resolve this. The new leader responsible for pupil premium is working with an external consultant to improve spending and evaluation. Leaders have commissioned an external review for the summer term to evaluate the progress made.

Tutors check each pupil's equipment every morning so that pupils are ready to learn. At the start of every lesson, there is a silent starter activity to strengthen recall of current and past work. Pupils are responding well to these initiatives.

Pupils know their targets. When interviewed, younger pupils mentioned that they ask a buddy and reflect on their learning before asking a teacher for help. This was less evident during visits to classrooms. In some cases, insufficient time is given to students to enable them to take responsibility for their own learning. Despite this, pupils in key stage 4 said that there is an improvement in teaching in several subjects and higher expectations of them regarding work.

Safeguarding is effective. The deputy designated safeguarding lead and the attendance officer monitor the attendance of the most vulnerable pupils well. Their record-keeping is of a high quality. They work with a team of staff who liaise effectively with multi-agency support and parents. The designated safeguarding lead does not have a sufficient overview of the work of these teams. Although staff received training on the new government policy, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018, the school policy was not put onto the website until the day before the inspection. Even now, the policy does not highlight some of the changes, such as the management of peer-on-peer bullying. As a result, parents and the wider community are not well-informed of current national safeguarding concerns.

Because many of the initiatives are new and yet to have an impact, there will be a further visit by Her Majesty's Inspectors in the future.

External support

School leaders are working with three different trusts to improve practice. There has been careful evaluation of the capacity required to manage this well. Each trust has been picked to support a unique aspect of the school's work. For example, leaders are working with a school in Oxfordshire to raise teacher expectations of what the most able pupils should learn and achieve in English.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Plymouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks

Her Majesty's Inspector