

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



23 May 2019

Ms Lindsay Taylor-Potts
Walton Priory Middle School
Beacon Rise
Walton
Stone
Staffordshire
ST15 0AL

Dear Ms Taylor-Potts

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Walton Priory Middle School

Following my visit to your school on 8 May 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 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are 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:

- develop assessment to help pupils learn from their mistakes
- further improve the progress of the most able pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and middle leaders, pupils and the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated, as was

the support from advisers you have commissioned. A wide range of learning was observed and pupils' workbooks scrutinised. I evaluated your self-evaluation document and arrangements. I scrutinised your pupil premium strategy and the review of your spending of pupil premium funding. Together, we visited four lessons across a range of subjects and year groups in school. I reviewed your analysis of pupil progress information for all year groups and across a wide range of subjects. I scrutinised pupils' workbooks from across the curriculum and in both key stages. I checked your safeguarding arrangements.

Context

The school has ceased to be a hard federation. You agreed this with the local authority and the Department for Education in 2018.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, you have led the school in a determined and effective manner. You have improved the quality of teaching and helped staff to work well together, sharing and developing resources and strategies. As a result, pupils are well motivated and keen to do well because they are interested in their learning. You have improved performance management so that teachers' training is linked to their development needs and whole-school targets. Leaders' self-evaluation is largely accurate but has not picked up with enough urgency the need to look at the progress and outcomes for most-able pupils.

Middle leaders are effective. They have strong plans for improvement and know how to develop the curriculum so that teaching gives pupils a chance to be well prepared for the next stage of their education. These leaders have ensured that there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching across their departments. They plan teaching effectively for most pupils and want to ensure that the curriculum is challenging. There is a strong partnership between middle leaders and the senior leaders. You have put in place a helpful system to ensure accountability between staff. This is supported with a wide range of training opportunities. Staff are highly motivated and focus closely on pupils' progress. Staff work effectively to moderate and standardise their assessments and do this in collaboration with other schools. As a result, there is a high level of accuracy in teachers' judgements.

You have led a focus on your assessment policy. As a result, pupils frequently check their work, soon after receiving feedback. There is less evidence that pupils have learned from these mistakes later in their workbooks. Teachers have a high degree of subject knowledge and have high expectations of most pupils. However, most-able pupils too frequently complete challenges that are too easy for them before tackling those that demand greater knowledge, understanding and skills.

Governors are active, supportive and challenging. They have formed a strong partnership with you and other leaders. The chair has a particularly helpful

partnership with you and there is an open, trusting and demanding approach to school evaluation and planning. The use of additional funding is effective and so there is no difference between the effective progress made by a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils by the time they reach Year 8. The sports premium funding is also monitored well. Governors know that standards are rising in physical education (PE). PE provision has been expanded to three hours a week, and is taught by specialist staff. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is broad and balanced. There are innovative approaches that maintain pupils' interest, such as the all-day cross-curricular food and nutrition event I observed. In this, pupils successfully learned about healthy eating and food preparation and improved their cross-curricular skills of calculation, weighing, measuring and evaluation. You have blended science, technology, engineering and mathematics learning and this continues to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils' modern language learning is of a high standard, with examples in books of pupils improving their extended writing in French. I heard pupils in key stages 2 and 3 read aloud and they were fluent and expressive. Pupils typically choose a wide range of fiction and enjoy reading for pleasure. Questioning strategies are being strengthened across different subjects and pupil groups. This is leading to effective progress for most pupils. Some learning objectives do not allow for good enough progress, especially for the most able pupils. You use a 'bronze, silver, gold' definition of good progress. Too many 'bronze objectives' are too easy for the higher-attaining pupils.

In mathematics, teachers have benefited from high-quality training. For example, teaching in mathematics mastery is effective. You have made good use of the external support you commissioned. As a result, for example, leaders consider when skills should be taught, and in what order, to ensure deeper learning. However, there is not enough chance for pupils to revisit skills during a year and remember what they have improved.

Pupils make effective progress learning punctuation skills. Where they make use of good-quality strategies, pupils learn correct spellings. For the most able pupils there is not enough challenging work that helps them learn adventurous grammatical forms. Intervention support for lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is especially strong and builds well on pupils' learning in key stage 1. Their spelling, punctuation and grammar is improving because teaching gives priority to phonics.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are polite, attentive and courteous. Pupils speak highly of the school and they understand how to keep themselves safe. They know who to go to if they have concerns. They are glad they chose the school. Numbers on roll are rising. Attendance is high and improving for all groups of pupils. There are positive relationships between pupils and staff, and, as a result, most pupils have a keen interest in knowledge, understanding and skills.

Safeguarding is a strength and is very well led. Staff are highly informed and well trained. There are very safe practices and securely managed pre-employment checks. The leader responsible plans strong personalised training for staff and this means your colleagues inform one another of concerns, plan actions and keep each other up to date with outcomes.

External support

Leaders are making effective use of the support provided by the local authority and advice you have commissioned. Leaders are open to criticism and challenge and act upon sound advice from their partners in a timely manner. New middle leaders in particular are learning from this support to insist on consistent quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

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

Yours sincerely

Graham Tyrer
Ofsted Inspector