

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Davina Aspinall
Headteacher
Maghull High School
Ormonde Drive
Maghull
Liverpool
Merseyside
L31 7AW

Dear Ms Aspinall

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Maghull High School

Following my visit to your school on 12 September 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors 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 ensure that:

- the plans to improve the school allow governors to check whether leaders' actions are working quickly enough
- subject leaders consider what end points the curriculum is building towards and what pupils will be able to know and do, and plan the curriculum accordingly
- the curriculum is designed and developed to be ambitious for pupils and that it meets the needs of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- the work given to pupils across subjects is demanding and at least matches the aims of the national curriculum at key stage 3

- teachers support pupils to develop their written English so that pupils' work across the curriculum is of a good quality.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders. This included the deputy headteacher and two senior assistant headteachers. I also met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

With senior leaders, I observed pupils' learning in English, mathematics, science and history. I also checked pupils' work. I observed how pupils behave around the school. I considered a range of documents relating to school improvement, including leaders' self-evaluation. I checked senior leaders' plans to improve the school. I also checked documents relating to safeguarding.

I spoke with a representative from the local authority on the telephone. I met with a group of Year 11 pupils. I also met with a group of subject leaders. I checked leaders' systems which ensure that adults at the school are safe to work with pupils.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been many changes to staffing. These include your appointment as headteacher in November 2018. Following your appointment, you have made changes to the roles of some senior leaders. Two assistant headteachers have joined the senior leadership team and you have appointed a new leader of the sixth form.

Following a review of governance in January 2019, there have been changes to the governing body. These changes include the appointment of four new governors.

There have also been changes in the leadership of some subjects, including science and English. You have appointed a new leader of performing arts. There have been changes to staffing in English, history, mathematics and science. An extra teacher of food technology has been appointed. Four new teaching assistants have joined the school.

More recently, there have been changes to the school's accommodation. Staff and pupils have moved into a new state-of-the-art building. An old school building has been demolished and other buildings are being refurbished. There have been no changes to the school's status. Leaders and governors are working closely with a local multi-academy trust. This relationship is helping to ensure that leaders and teachers benefit from more support.

Main findings

Leaders, governors and trustees know that there is more to do before pupils benefit from a good quality of education. Since the previous inspection, you have acted to bring about some improvements to the school. Even so, the school is not as far along on its journey of improvement as it should be. While pupils achieve well in some subjects, for example in Spanish and engineering, you were disappointed with pupils' recent achievements in several subjects. These include English, mathematics, science, history and geography. This is because aspects of the curriculum are not as effective as they should be in helping pupils to know and remember more. For example, in some subjects, leaders have thought carefully about what pupils need to know and be able to do. Where this is the case, leaders have planned their curriculums accordingly. That said, in other subjects, leaders have not given enough thought to the order of topics within the curriculum. This hinders pupils' achievement.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to sharpen your plans to improve the school. Your new plans show that you and your leadership team know the school well. For example, you are aware that staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. This is reflected in how well pupils conduct themselves around school and during lessons. You and other senior leaders also know what you need to do next. Your plans address those areas that inspectors identified. However, they do not provide governors with the information that they need to check whether your actions are working quickly enough.

Added to this, over the last 16 months, the governing body has not challenged senior leaders rigorously enough. This has delayed the pace of improvement. Following a review of governance, governors have acted to improve this aspect of leadership. Members of the governing body have benefited from training, and new governors have been appointed. This has increased the range of skills and experience on the governing body.

Also at the previous inspection, inspectors asked you to make learning more challenging for pupils. Your efforts to improve this area have been hampered by weaknesses in subject leadership. While some departments are well led, others require further improvement. In weaker subjects, the work given to pupils is not demanding enough. This is especially the case for younger pupils. This is because some subject leaders have not designed a curriculum that is sufficiently ambitious at key stage 3. This means that pupils begin some GCSE courses without a good enough knowledge of the subject.

Leaders identify pupils with SEND quickly when they join the school. Leaders ensure that this group of pupils receive extra help. This includes support from external agencies. Leaders also provide teachers with relevant information about the varying need of pupils with SEND. This allows teachers to better help those pupils requiring additional support. That said, some subject leaders do not consider the needs of

this group of pupils when planning the curriculum. For example, some subject leaders do not make clear how to help pupils with SEND remember the most important knowledge that they need to know.

At the previous inspection, inspectors also asked you to ensure that teachers adhere to school policies. Teachers apply some school policies consistently, such as the behaviour policy. However, this is not always the case with other policies. For example, there are inconsistencies in how well teachers support pupils with their written work. So, in some subjects, pupils do not produce written work that is of sufficiently good quality.

On a more positive note, you have acted to strengthen leadership across the school and stabilise staffing. Pupils, staff and governors are very positive about the changes that you have made. There is a refreshed determination to make Maghull High School good. Standards at the school are moving in the right direction.

External support

Following your appointment, leaders at every level are keen to benefit from external support. You have secured a range of support for every level of leadership. This external support has had a particularly positive effect on the quality of governance. More recently, external support is strengthening the leadership of some subject areas, for example English. Even so, at the time of this inspection, external support has not had enough impact on pupils' overall quality of education.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Gregory
Her Majesty's Inspector