

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T T 0300 123 1231

www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Dr Jayne Bartlett
Shenley Academy
Shenley Lane
Northfield
Birmingham
B29 4HE

Dear Dr Bartlett

Special measures monitoring inspection of Shenley Academy

Following my visit with Ann Pritchard, Her Majesty's Inspector and Martin Spoor, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 17 and 18 September 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 2018.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and manager are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint NQTs.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer (CEO) 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

Niall Gallagher

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2018.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management so that there is rapid improvement in pupils' achievement, especially pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils, by ensuring that:
 - pupils with SEND receive individualised and targeted support to allow them to successfully access learning and make the progress they are capable of
 - all leaders systematically evaluate the performance of groups of pupils so that they can spot trends and patterns more quickly
 - leaders monitor and scrutinise teachers' assessment of pupils' progress more carefully so that they understand what it is telling them and can intervene quickly to close any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - the curriculum in mathematics, especially in key stage 3, is sufficiently challenging to enable pupils to make progress
 - the additional funding the school receives has a positive impact on the outcomes of those groups of pupils it is intended to help.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make good progress by ensuring that teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of pupils and what they can achieve
 - plan tasks that meet pupils' needs and abilities so that work is not too easy or too challenging
 - make effective checks on pupils' understanding in lessons
 - use learning resources that engage pupils.
- Urgently reduce the amount of time some pupils miss from their education because of being absent from school or excluded for a fixed period of time.
- Leaders and the trust ensure that proper procedures are followed before a pupil is taken off the school roll.
- Improve the accuracy of the recording of pupils' attendance so that leaders can safeguard all pupils at the school.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 September 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other members of the school's leadership team. Inspectors also met with members of the multi-academy trust, including the CEO. Inspectors met with a range of staff, including newly qualified teachers (NQTs), the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and those with responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors met with pupils to talk about their experience of school.

Inspectors gathered evidence about the quality of education provided by the school. Inspectors visited lessons in subjects, including English, history, geography, science and modern languages. They also considered pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and the quality of leadership and management. Inspectors did not check the school's work to improve pupils' personal development to the same extent.

Context

At the time of the last inspection, the school did not have a headteacher. The current headteacher took up her post in April 2019. There have been other significant changes to the leadership team. Leaders have appointed a new senior assistant headteacher and a new SENCo from within the trust. During the last academic year, 26 members of staff left the school and 23 new members of staff have been appointed.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Leaders have taken appropriate action to address the concerns identified in the previous inspection report. Since the last inspection, leaders have prioritised mathematics and have worked hard, and with some success, to improve the subject. Half of the mathematics teachers were not at the school at the time of the previous inspection. The new staff, including one NQT, have settled well. The teachers who spoke to us were positive about the higher-quality training they have received recently. One member of staff said that training now focuses on what makes a good mathematics lesson.

The mathematics curriculum has improved since the last inspection. It is now better organised. There is also more challenging work for pupils. During the inspection, we visited a range of mathematics lessons and reviewed pupils' work. We noticed that teachers are beginning to use assessment to check how well pupils have understood their work.

While there have been some notable improvements, there is still much work to do before pupils get the best experience they can in mathematics.

Inspectors visited lessons in a range of other subjects, including English, history, geography, science and modern languages. Inspectors identified some positive aspects in English but there were fewer strengths elsewhere. Inspectors noted that lessons are not always planned in a thoughtful way and are often disconnected. This prevents pupils from building on what they have learned before. The pupils who spoke to inspectors were positive about English. They were less complimentary about their experiences in other subjects.

Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils, including those with SEND. Those with SEND were not positive about their experience in school. Leaders know that this is an area that they must improve, and more quickly than they have so far. All pupils with SEND now have their own learning passport. The passports explain what the pupils need to help them learn. However, staff are not using this information as well as they could.

Since the last inspection, leaders have considered all of the curriculum. They have identified some serious weaknesses in key stage 3. These weaknesses have resulted in significant gaps in what pupils know and can do. Key stage 3 is taught over two years instead of three. Pupils study history, geography and modern languages for one hour each week. Teachers do not have enough time to complete all the key stage 3 topics. Some pupils told us that they did not want to study these subjects in key stage 4 because they were not confident in them. The key stage 3 curriculum is currently under review. Leaders want to change the length of the key stage, as well as the time allocated to each subject.

Leaders are concerned about the gaps in pupils' knowledge. They have introduced regular extra support sessions in Year 11 to help pupils plug the gaps before their GCSEs. Leaders are having to do this because of the many weaknesses that have existed in the past.

Inspectors did not give the same level of consideration to pupils' personal development. However, inspectors did meet with pupils to talk about their views of the school. Pupils told inspectors that there are now more activities to get involved in after school. They particularly like the opportunities to represent the school in sports competitions. Pupils were also positive about the advice they get from teachers to help them to keep safe.

Pupils are clear about what is expected of them. They know that expectations have been raised and they have responded positively. Pupils look smart in their uniforms. They walk around the school building calmly and keep noise levels to an appropriate level. Pupils are no longer allowed to leave classrooms midway through a lesson unless they have a legitimate reason to do so. The pupils inspectors spoke to commented on the improved behaviour around the school. They said that they feel safe in school and now enjoy more positive relationships with staff, who they say treat them with respect.

In lessons, most pupils follow the instructions they are given. Behaviour is managed more effectively than it was previously. When lessons are well planned, pupils respond positively. This is the case in English. When lessons are poorly planned, particularly when expectations are too low, pupils become distracted.

Leaders have worked hard to improve pupils' behaviour since the last inspection. Staff have received training and the policy for managing behaviour has been tightened. Leaders regularly remind staff, pupils, parents and carers about the standards of behaviour they expect. The school's approach to managing behaviour is used consistently by staff. This area of the school's work has seen the most significant improvement.

Since the last inspection, the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly for all groups of pupils. There are no groups of pupils who are excluded more often than others. There have been no permanent exclusions from school since the last inspection.

Leaders are seeking to improve attendance. They now record attendance accurately and follow up absences quickly. Despite this, attendance remains low. Some groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, have particularly poor attendance. Leaders are continuing to work with families to improve attendance. However, until pupils recognise that they are getting a good deal at school, this is going to continue to be a challenge.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school

Leaders have worked hard to ensure that the school is moving in the right direction. They work well with leaders from the trust, who provide appropriate support and challenge. The school has also benefited from collaborating with two local schools from within the trust.

Leaders know what the school does well and what needs to improve. They have good plans that explain how they will improve the school. Leaders recognise that the improvements they have made thus far represent a positive start but that they are only the first stage in the improvement process. Since the previous inspection, leaders have focused on safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and mathematics. There are clear improvements in each of these areas, although attendance remains an area of concern.

Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are still underachieving. Leaders and trustees have reviewed how the additional funding for these pupils is being used. They have begun to address some of the weaknesses that existed. For example, the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is being used to run a science, technology, engineering and mathematics club to help raise aspirations. This work is still at a very early stage and has not yet made a difference.

During the inspection, we considered staff workload. A small number of staff told us that they were unhappy with the additional pressure they were under and senior

leaders were not giving them enough help. Other staff recognised that things needed to change for the school to improve and felt that what they were being asked to do was reasonable.

A small number of pupils continue to have some of their education away from the school. Leaders ensure that pupils are safe when they attend other settings by carrying out regular visits. Some of the placements are suitable and give the pupils a good chance to develop skills and gain relevant qualifications. However, some pupils are not getting a good enough deal. Leaders have not ensured that all pupils are getting a full-time education.

The previous inspection report refers to leaders removing eight Year 11 pupils on the same day in the autumn term 2017. It states that leaders were not able to give a valid explanation as to why this had happened. The report concludes that this practice suggests 'off-rolling'. During this inspection, inspectors scrutinised the school's records for pupils who have moved out of the school. Leaders now maintain much more comprehensive records. These records include the date and reasons why each pupil has moved school. Although there are pupils who still leave during the school year, there is no evidence to suggest there is any 'off-rolling' taking place now.

Following the previous inspection, leaders took the decision to keep the sixth form open, despite falling student numbers. At the same time, leaders reduced the curriculum offer. There is now just one option for students. This is a football qualification organised and managed by Birmingham City Football Club. There are currently 71 students in the sixth form. Only two students transferred from Year 11. The rest have joined from other schools. Students spend three and a half days each week at Birmingham City Football Club, where they learn football skills. They spend the remaining time at school, where they study GCSE English, mathematics and sports.

Leaders and trustees are concerned about the sixth form, in particular the appropriateness of the curriculum and the quality of education provided. They have identified this as another key priority.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders, including those with responsibility for governance, have an accurate understanding of the school's current position. They are aware of the areas that require significant improvement and are starting to take action to secure the necessary improvement.
- Leaders have raised expectations for staff and pupils. They are trying to achieve the necessary improvements while, at the same time, being reasonable about the demands they are placing on staff.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The curriculum remains disjointed and poorly sequenced in many areas. Leaders have been successful in their work to improve mathematics, and English is a relative strength. Leaders need to do more to improve the other subjects. Leaders must maintain the current pace of change to ensure that the improvements are substantial and rapid enough in all areas of the curriculum.
- The sixth form remains a significant area of concern. Leaders have not made any amendments to the sixth-form provision for the start of this academic year. The current cohort of sixth-form students will not complete their programme of study with Birmingham City Football Club until July 2020. This is restricting how much leaders can change before then.
- Despite leaders' concerted effort to improve attendance, pupils are still not attending school as regularly as they should.
- Leaders are not using the additional funding they receive for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND as effectively as they should.

External support

The school does not receive any external support.