

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



15 November 2019

Mr Jonathan Lumb  
Principal  
Haughton Academy  
Salters Lane South  
Darlington  
County Durham  
DL1 2AN

Dear Mr Lumb

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Haughton Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 24 October 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, governors and the trust 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:

- intensify actions to improve curriculum planning across subjects, including the development of senior and subject leaders' skills to check the quality of the curriculum
- ensure that the pace of improvement is sustained by strengthening the links between the education standards committee and the trust board
- improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you, your chief executive officer and your senior leadership team. We discussed the actions taken to improve the school since the last inspection. I undertook lesson visits with your assistant headteacher responsible for teaching and learning. I also met your deputy headteacher to explore behaviour and attendance. In addition, I met senior leaders to discuss the use of assessment and the quality of the curriculum. I also met groups of pupils to discuss behaviour and any changes they had identified since the last inspection. I held a telephone conversation with your education development partner. I held another telephone conversation with a headteacher who has provided extra support. I met three members of the education standards committee, including the chair. I talked to the chair of the trust by telephone. I examined the school improvement plan as well as other documents, including leaders' self-evaluation and attendance information. I also looked at a sample of work in pupils' books.

## **Context**

In March 2019, the Department for Education announced that the school would be part of its ONE Vision programme. As part of this programme, the school will receive additional support from high-performing schools.

## **Main findings**

Since the school's previous inspection in June 2018, you have worked more closely with external partners to check standards and secure improvement. Your team are working with local schools, advisers and subject specialists to develop subject leadership and expertise. This work is helping to improve what pupils can achieve and their standards of behaviour.

There are many signs that teachers are becoming better at using assessment to support pupils' learning. For example, in mathematics teachers were seen teaching pupils how to pick out learning points from recent assessments. Pupils followed any errors carefully in their workbooks. In English, too, teachers provided feedback during lessons that helped pupils to improve the quality of their work. These regular checks on what pupils know are helping teachers to pitch work more effectively. This is helping pupils to make better progress across the curriculum. The evidence of the effect of intervention strategies is not as clear at this stage.

Improvements are beginning to bear fruit. At the end of key stage 4 in 2019, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at grade 4 and above increased by 10%, and by a more modest 1% at grade 5 and above. Overall attainment improved across many subjects. Pupils' progress also showed improvement for a third successive year. However, this progress remains below that seen nationally.

You and your team are in the process of reviewing the school curriculum. Your

deputy headteacher is working with subject leaders to develop their curriculum plans. You are working with local authority advisers and other schools to support this process. You have recently decided to revert to a three-year programme of study at key stage 3. This reflects a commitment to increase pupils' access to a wider range of subjects for as long as possible. In many cases, this work is in its early stages, with plans at key stage 3 less developed.

You and your team have taken concerted action to improve standards of behaviour. You have introduced clearer behaviour systems. Pupils have a much stronger awareness of the sanctions imposed if they misbehave. Staff implement these strategies with greater consistency. You are using new initiatives to help pupils to manage their behaviour and reflect upon their actions. All of the pupils I talked to said that behaviour was now much better. Year 11 pupils said they had noticed a dramatic improvement. These improvements are reflected in a significant reduction in the use of exclusions. These have declined by approximately a third. In addition, there has been a marked reduction in the incidents of poor behaviour.

You are working with pupils to stress the importance of kindness and respect. Pupils talked positively about this work. Younger pupils said that they felt welcomed. These actions are creating a more positive learning environment where pupils can work productively. Your team shared examples of their work to make pupils aware of the dangers caused by forms of extremism. Pupils talked about the lessons they had learned about important issues such as hate crime. They also talked about the support provided by the school's LGBT support group. These actions to promote equality and respect are an important part of the school's work.

Your team have carried out intensive action to improve pupils' attendance. The importance of regular attendance is constantly reinforced to pupils and parents. Pastoral leaders and tutors maintain a continual focus on attendance. Your attendance officer is working much more closely with pupils and parents to address barriers to attendance. These combined actions are making a difference. In 2018/19, overall attendance improved by 1%. For the first time, attendance figures are in line with those seen nationally. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent has also declined. Despite these improvements, you recognise that more needs to be done to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

The education standards committee monitors progress closely on behalf of the trust board. They meet with increasing regularity to check the effectiveness of improvement actions. Your chair recognises some of the marked improvements in attendance and behaviour. Governors are responding purposefully to the recent review of governance. They are developing an action plan to further improve the support and challenge that they provide. Members of your standards committee recognise that links with the trust board need to be strengthened. This is particularly important to ensure that the pace of improvement accelerates in the months ahead.

### **External support**

You have worked closely with external partners to secure additional insights into your improvement journey. In links developed through the ONE Vision programme, you recently invited a local headteacher and her team to review what pupils experience in many subjects. You are using this evaluation to target areas for improvement and build staff expertise. You continue to work with improvement partners from Durham local authority to strengthen leadership and subject expertise.

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

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**