

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 November 2019

Mr Paul Rust
Principal
Morley Place Academy
Old Road
Conisbrough
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN12 3LZ

Dear Mr Rust

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Morley Place Academy

Following my visit to your school on 6 November 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in February 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Karine Hendley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2019

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress from their respective starting points by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - providing work in all subjects that consistently challenges all groups of pupils.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that improvements to the curriculum are continued to deepen pupils' learning in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - checking closely that strategies used to support different groups of pupils are having the maximum impact.
- Take further action to improve attendance for all groups of pupils and reduce persistent absence.
- Increase the level of support for the minority of pupils who display challenging behaviour so that the number of fixed-term and repeat fixed-term exclusions reduces.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 6 November 2019

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, senior leaders and staff. I visited lessons and looked at pupils' work, jointly with senior leaders. I also met with the deputy chief executive officer for the trust and members of the academy advisory board (AAB), including the chair of this group. I spoke to parents and pupils from each year group.

Context

Since the inspection in February 2019, there have been very few changes to staffing. The principal has been in post since 2015. Other senior leaders and most teaching staff have been employed at the school for two years or longer. The school joined the Delta Academies Trust in April 2018. This stability has allowed leaders to make a prompt start in improving the school's weaknesses.

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

The quality of education

Leaders have improved the teaching of English and mathematics. Teachers know what is expected of them in these subjects. They make frequent checks on pupils' understanding. They are beginning to spot pupils' misconceptions and successes quickly. In some year groups, teaching staff use this information well to build pupils' knowledge. Due to these improvements, Year 6 pupils who left the school this summer achieved more highly than previous cohorts. However, pupils' achievements in reading are still significantly below average.

The last inspection identified that pupils' learning in other subjects was not deep enough. To rectify this, leaders and teaching staff are working together to redesign the curriculum. They have started to think carefully about what pupils should learn. This work is at an early stage of development. Therefore, it is too soon to say whether the curriculum is well planned and ambitious.

Teachers have been trained to help them to identify and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils often have extra teaching, individually or in small groups. Sometimes this takes place before whole-class teaching to give pupils a head start. These arrangements ensure that pupils can learn alongside their peers most of the time. However, leaders do not have a strategic plan for checking on the effectiveness of teaching for these pupils. Also, the targets set for these pupils are often too vague. They do not pinpoint the knowledge pupils need to practise and remember.

Leaders now check on the achievements of disadvantaged pupils more carefully. Pupils often benefit from additional teaching sessions. Some also have the chance to develop their interests and talents, for example in music or sport. However, leaders have not spotted where disadvantaged pupils face more challenges. For example, some disadvantaged pupils are regularly absent from school. Others are not only disadvantaged but are also pupils with SEND. Leaders know this information. However, they have not used it to create an accurate view of the experiences of disadvantaged pupils. Without this, they cannot make sure pupils in this group achieve their potential.

Behaviour and attitudes

Leaders have maintained pupils' positive attitudes to learning identified at the last inspection. Pupils are polite and mature and conduct themselves well. Since the last inspection, all staff have had training in supporting the small number of pupils who present challenging behaviour. Staff say they are now more tuned into pupils' moods and emotions. They feel skilled in de-escalating situations which could lead to conflict. They also said managing pupils' behaviour was now a team responsibility. Pupils value the nurture and sensory room which has been introduced. They are being taught to recognise when negative emotions arise. At these times, pupils can use the resources in the room to calm themselves. The number of pupils who are excluded or involved in behaviour incidents is reducing. Leaders know there are still too many incidents and fixed-term exclusions.

Leaders have worked hard to raise pupils' attendance. Their efforts were rewarded last academic year when this increased and was close to the national average. There is still work to do to reduce the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from the school. Leaders have recently appointed a member of staff to work with families and pupils with low or falling attendance. She is due to start work at the end of November.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school

Leaders have concentrated on improving the priorities identified at the last inspection. They are accurate in their evaluations of the difference they have made so far. They are fully aware of the scale of the work which is still needed. This work is detailed on leaders' plans. Senior leaders have plotted out ambitious milestones to judge their own success. Trust leaders have helped them. However, improvement plans sometimes contain vague targets which contradict these milestones. This could cause confusion for staff or those responsible for governance.

Despite the last inspection judgement, leaders have created a very positive atmosphere in the school. Pupils and parents speak highly of the school. Strong relationships exist between them and the staff team. All involved with the school show loyalty and a desire for continued improvements.

Teaching staff appreciate the training and opportunities they have to develop their knowledge. Training in reading, spelling, speaking, mathematics and behaviour have improved staff performance. Staff also told me leaders listen to their views. Staff are consulted about changes, such as those being made to the curriculum. Leaders, including trust leaders, are considerate of staff well-being. They make sure staff have the time, support and resources needed to fulfil what is expected of them.

Leaders and staff are held to account for their performance and pupils' achievements. The trust is very thorough in checking on the school's work and the difference this makes to pupils. Trust leaders and AAB members challenge leaders appropriately. This culture of accountability ensures that any shortcomings are identified swiftly.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders are honest about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are focused on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They are fully committed to providing the best possible education for pupils. This is reflected in a determined, enthusiastic staff team. All the staff understand the priorities and are on board with improving these aspects.
- Developing pupils' speaking and reading skills is at the top of leaders' priorities. Training for teachers in these two areas has improved teaching. Pupils are increasingly articulate and they enjoy reading.
- The number of pupils involved in behavioural incidents and exclusions has reduced. This is because staff training and new strategies have been successful.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- There is still a lot of work to do to improve the support for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have not consistently identified the factors which hinder learning for these pupils. Leaders do some checks on the quality of education for these pupils. However, they have not considered carefully enough how to check the quality of education for all pupils in these groups. This means that the quality of education some pupils are receiving might not be checked.

External support

Leaders are working with the trust to improve important aspects of the school's work. The trust provides a comprehensive range of training and support for leaders and teaching staff. This includes training delivered by external consultants. A trust expert teacher trains staff by teaching alongside them each week. Leaders also work closely with attendance staff from the local authority. This package of support has been vital in securing the improvements seen so far.