

18 November 2019

Mr Andrew Murphy
Principal
North Shore Academy
Talbot Street
Stockton-on-Tees
Cleveland
TS20 2AY

Dear Mr Murphy

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to North Shore 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 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 the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- build on improvements in pupils' attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
- continue to enhance the breadth of the curriculum for all pupils.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, the executive principal and members of your senior leadership team. We discussed the actions taken to improve the school since the last inspection. I undertook lesson visits with your vice-principal and your special educational needs coordinator. I also met your vice-principal and inclusion manager to explore behaviour and attendance. In addition, I met senior leaders to discuss curriculum developments. I also met several groups of pupils to discuss behaviour and any changes they had identified since the last inspection. I met the chief executive

officer (CEO) of the trust. I also met the chair of the local academy council, who is also a trustee. I looked at curriculum development plans, as well as other documents, including behaviour and attendance information. I also looked at some examples of work in pupils' books.

Context

There have been no significant changes in context since the previous inspection.

Main findings

Leaders have accelerated the pace of improvement. They are confidently addressing the areas for improvement raised at the previous inspection. Pupils' achievements continue to strengthen. In 2019, attainment in English and mathematics at key stage 4 improved further.

Leaders are improving the quality of teaching and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders promptly identify pupils' needs. They work with local primary schools to ensure that support is in place swiftly for those transferring to the school in Year 7. Leaders have provided training on how to adapt support guidance to meet pupils' needs across the curriculum. Teachers have received specific training from specialists to enhance their expertise. They are in a much better position to support pupils with SEND.

Staff are attentive to the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants to provide focused support. Teachers encourage pupils to share their answers and explain their thinking. Pupils with SEND are encouraged to be active participants in lessons.

Teachers review support for pupils with SEND during weekly meetings. They have good links with a range of external partners to address any barriers to learning. Leaders are working with a local special school to further enhance provision. The effects of this improved support are reflected in much higher rates of attendance for pupils with SEND. There has also been a drastic reduction in incidents of exclusion.

Leaders have built on the work apparent at the previous inspection to improve behaviour around the school site. In lessons and in social areas, there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils and teachers treat each other with respect. Leaders and teachers are helping pupils who, on occasions, find it difficult to manage their behaviour. In areas such as 'The Bridge' and 'The Personal Learning Centre', pupils work with staff to improve behaviour. Pupils are helped to catch up with their work. In my visits to these areas, the atmosphere was productive and positive. I talked to a number of pupils who all said they were treated with care and respect. They gave practical examples of how support was helping them to manage their behaviour and get back into lessons.

This specific support, combined with high standards of behaviour, has contributed to a significant reduction in the incidents of exclusion. These have reduced by 96% over two years. There have been a limited number of exclusions so far this academic year. Pupils confirmed this picture of improvement. They commented upon drastic improvements in the culture and day-to-day working of the school. Pupils value the care and support of their teachers. They expressed confidence in their future because of the stability in behaviour and the improving quality of what they experience. Pupils expressed a pride in their school that they want to be more widely recognised.

Leaders have intensified their efforts to improve pupils' attendance. The team continues to make daily home visits to secure better attendance from specific pupils. Leaders analyse patterns of attendance and refocus support to address areas of weakness. Their specific actions are supported by the wider improvements to teaching and behaviour. This is now a school where the majority of pupils want to attend, including disadvantaged pupils. However, the attendance of this group of pupils remains weaker than that of their peers.

Leaders' actions are creating a much more inclusive school. Vulnerable pupils receive much better support. The literacy coordinator is introducing an exciting initiative to develop pupils' love of reading. The CEO has invested substantial resources to support this. This will be rolled out across the trust. In addition, the principal is working with his team to build pupils' knowledge. Leaders have built a mood of confidence that is fuelling improvement. Teachers at North Shore are leading initiatives across the trust.

Leaders have enhanced the curriculum. Pupils have greater access to modern foreign languages. Pupils in Year 7 now study music and performing arts. In lesson visits, pupils were clearly valuing these opportunities for creative expression. Leaders are further reviewing the curriculum. They have developed curriculum plans to map out what pupils will learn and when. This is creating meaningful links between subjects. Leaders are exploring ways of enabling pupils to study a wider range of subjects for longer. They realise that the decisions they make on the longer-term development of the curriculum will have an important influence on the next phase of the school's development.

The chair of the local academy council has a strong grasp on the school's progress. He and his team have the expertise to hold leaders to account. He is aware of how improved structures across the trust have underpinned improvement. His position on the council and the trust board provides an overview to support ongoing improvement.

External support

The school receives regular support from trust directors and leaders on all aspects of its work. The trust does not regard this as external support. Trust leaders have

built an ethos where working for the school and for the trust are one and the same. This joint working has supported the substantial improvements made.

The school does work with other partners. For example, the school has worked with specialist providers, such as 'Daisy Chain', to enhance support for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. The school also works with a range of partners to support pupils' social and emotional welfare. These partnerships are having a positive effect.

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

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector