

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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13 July 2021

Mr Andrew Robinson  
Principal  
Stoke High School - Ormiston Academy  
Maidenhall Approach  
Ipswich  
Suffolk  
IP2 8PL

Dear Mr Robinson

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stoke High School - Ormiston Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 29 June 2021, 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(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

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

**Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.**

The school should take further action to:

- make sure teachers use the information they have about pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to support pupils to learn well.

**Context**

You were appointed as principal in September 2019. The multi-academy trust appointed a new regional director in September 2020. Approximately 50% of teachers have joined the school since the most recent section 5 inspection. You have appointed new curriculum leaders in several subjects.

COVID-19 has had a negative impact on your work to improve attendance.

**Main findings**

You have taken decisive action to strengthen provision at the school. You know where the school is on the journey to good and have firm plans in place to continue improving the education pupils receive.

You set clear expectations of what you expect from subject leaders. You asked them to identify what core knowledge it was essential for pupils to know about their subjects. You invented 'Freda', a fictional teacher who might arrive in school at short notice. Your challenge to curriculum leaders was to make curriculum plans so well structured that, if Freda arrived, she would know what she had to teach straight away.

Work on these plans is well underway, but not finished. In key stage 3 English, for example, leaders have identified what pupils need to know to prepare them for key stage 4 study. This is clearly mapped out. Mathematics is not as far advanced. There is still some work still to do on choosing which core knowledge pupils need. You and other leaders know this and are continuing your work to make sure pupils learn well across all subjects.

You have implemented a whole school approach to helping pupils remember what they have been taught. Teachers now routinely require pupils to recall and explain information from lessons in both the recent, and more distant, past. This serves twin purposes. It informs teachers about how well pupils have learned, and it helps pupils to get knowledge to 'stick' in their memories.

Provision of education for pupils with SEND is not as good as it needs to be. You have reviewed the different needs of pupils. You have given staff information on how to help pupils. At the moment, not enough staff use this information. This means pupils do not get the help they need to learn as well as they should.

Firm plans are in place to expand your provision for pupils who struggle to read. You have invested in a new library area, equipped with carefully chosen books. You run 'literacy mastery' sessions for pupils whose reading is not as fluid as would be expected at their age. A separate phonics approach is used for some pupils who struggle with the basics of reading. This year, you trialled using this approach more

widely. You intend to teach phonics to all pupils with low levels of literacy from September 2021.

Much has been done to improve attendance at the school. Every pupil who is absent from school is telephoned on the day of their absence. On their return, a member of senior staff meets with them to discuss their attendance. Some pupils are picked up from home by a minibus provided by the school. Pupils review their own attendance every week.

Prior to the pandemic, attendance figures were on a steep upward trajectory. COVID-19 has had a negative impact on this. For example, much of your work revolves around rewarding good attendance, such as through assemblies and fun activities in groups. Social distancing restrictions have limited your ability to do these. You have also found some pupils are reluctant to attend school due to anxieties around catching COVID-19.

You are now increasing the number of staff who work with pupils to improve their attendance. You intend to revive the competitive spirit which helped encourage pupils to attend.

You have enhanced your systems of support for pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour. You have been clear about expectations and put in place a new behaviour system. You have established a stable teaching staff, giving pupils a more consistent experience of how behaviour is managed. This reduced the number of pupils who are excluded from school. You are adopting a new approach to provide more bespoke support for some pupils next academic year. This is because, while lower, the number of pupils excluded from the school remains higher than it should be.

You have refined the systems for recording the actions staff take to keep pupils safe. Every two weeks, key staff meet to discuss all pupils in the school. Notes of these meetings are kept and show what follow up actions need to be taken. You have increased the number of visits staff make to pupils' homes to check on pupils' welfare. Safeguarding leaders are now tenacious in securing support for pupils from external agencies. You have added an extra layer of checking to safeguarding systems by ensuring safeguarding leaders provide regular reports to governors and the trust.

### **Additional support**

The Ormiston Academies Trust is helping you to improve provision. They, with governors, hold you to account through half termly 'strategic progress board' meetings. They provide expert guidance in developing the curriculum. They have helped you start to improve provision for pupils with SEND. Trust officers worked

with you on enhancing safeguarding systems following the most recent section 8 inspection. The trust provides effective support in areas where you need it most.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other school leaders, the regional director of the trust and members of the local governing body. I reviewed your evaluation of the school and your school improvement plan.

I discussed curriculum plans for English and mathematics with the leaders of those areas. I visited lessons in these and other subjects. I looked at the information leaders provide to teachers about pupils' SEND.

I reviewed the school's single central record of pre-employment checks and reviewed safeguarding records with leaders of safeguarding.

I reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the six free-text responses. I spoke with pupils during their free time and considered the 48 responses to Ofsted's survey of the views of staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Hemmings  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**