

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Nicola White
Principal
Christ's College
Pennywell Road
Sunderland
Tyne and Wear
SR4 8PG

Dear Ms White

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Christ's College

Following my visit to your school on 11 November 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 COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you 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:

- ensure that governors have a strong understanding of the curriculum and its impact on pupils' learning, so that they can support and challenge leaders effectively.

Context

Since joining the school in September 2020, you have made a number of changes to the leadership structure, supported by the Emmanuel Schools Foundation. There have been several key appointments to the school, including a leader for phonics, a special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) and a new lead for early years. Fourteen teachers joined the school in September 2021. You currently have a vacancy for a primary headteacher. A new chair of governors recently took up post.

Main findings

You and other leaders are taking the right actions to improve the school. As a result, all areas identified in the last inspection have improved. Staff feel supported by you and your leadership team. They know that you are mindful of workload, and that you will listen to their concerns. There is a real sense of staff working together to bring about sustained change.

The responses received to the Ofsted' Parent View survey show that parents are increasingly positive about the school. Pupils agree. They said that the teachers are friendly and help them learn. There is little bullying and if it occurs, pupils are confident that staff will sort it out.

You and senior leaders from the trust have focused on developing middle leadership. Subject leaders have received training and support to develop high-quality and ambitious curriculum plans. Primary and secondary subject leads have worked together to develop clear plans from early years to key stage 4. These plans now set out the important knowledge that leaders want pupils to know and remember over time. Topics are carefully sequenced to build on what pupils already know.

A positive reading culture is developing across the school. The refurbished libraries are vibrant and inviting spaces. Pupils can choose from a range of high-quality books. Pupils of all ages take part in different schemes to encourage them to develop a love of reading. In the primary phase, staff are skilled at teaching phonics. Books for practising reading are now carefully matched to the sounds children know. The leader for phonics carefully monitors the progress pupils make. Those who are struggling to read are supported to catch up quickly. Some pupils in key stage 3 are not fluent readers. You recognise that some would benefit from support with their phonics.

You appointed an experienced SENDCo, who took up post in September 2021. She has kept oversight of all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There is now careful analysis of their attendance, attainment and progress. This helps inform interventions to ensure that every pupil is supported to meet their potential. The SENDCo has worked rapidly to improve the support plans for many pupils with SEND. Plans now include the views of pupils and parents. Teaching staff have been trained to review and update support plans. Staff said that this has helped them get to know pupils

better and provide the right support. Some plans still need to be reviewed. This is a priority for leaders.

You value the support you have received from the trust around curriculum development. Teachers benefit from working with staff from other trust schools. Teachers said that subject networks allow them to share practice, such as on the use of assessment.

Governors are provided with rich information and analysis regarding the school's performance. However, governors do not hold leaders to account sufficiently well for all aspects of the school's work. They do not routinely challenge school leaders on areas such as improving the curriculum.

Additional support

You value the support that you receive from a headteacher from the trust executive leadership team, who has been commissioned to be your school improvement lead. This has helped you to prioritise the areas for further development and take decisions to improve the curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders and curriculum leaders for English, mathematics and science. I also met with the phonics leader and the SENDCo. I spoke with a group of staff and a group of pupils. I met the chair and two other members of the school improvement board, as well as the trust's chief executive officer and school improvement lead, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited a range of lessons and looked at pupils' workbooks in maths and history. I reviewed minutes of the school improvement board meetings and looked at other policies and documents. I considered the 66 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Eleanor Belfield
Her Majesty's Inspector