

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



10 January 2022

Natalie Jones
Head of School
Co-op Academy Leeds
Stoney Rock Lane
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS9 7HD

Dear Miss Jones

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Co-op Academy Leeds

Following my visit to your school on 1 December 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 three 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:

- continue plans to improve pupils' attendance, particularly for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Context

Since the previous routine monitoring inspection in March 2021, there have been several changes to the senior leadership team and staffing. Following the resignation of the previous headteacher, an executive principal was appointed in April 2021. An existing vice-principal was appointed as head of school in July 2021. The trust has appointed additional leadership roles with the aim of accelerating the rate of improvement. These include two new assistant-principals with responsibility for the quality of education and inclusion. Three new subject leaders, including for mathematics, have joined the school this academic year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the pace of improvement. Nevertheless, leaders have taken the opportunity to develop the school's curriculum. For example, subject leaders have worked with colleagues from another school within the trust to develop and improve their curriculum plans.

Leaders believe that the pandemic has had a negative impact on some pupils' learning habits and behaviour. Leaders have included addressing this issue in the school's development plan.

Main findings

Since being appointed, you and your new leadership team have acted swiftly and decisively to address the right priorities. As a result, the pace of improvement is gathering momentum after a delay because of the pandemic and turbulence in staffing. You have raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Staff share leaders' vision and sense of urgency to improve the school.

You and other leaders have rewritten the school's improvement plan. The plan sharply focuses on tackling the areas for improvement identified in the last section 5 inspection. You have taken positive steps to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. With the support of the trust, leadership has been strengthened at all levels. There is now greater capacity in senior leadership. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the areas that require improvement.

The previous inspection asked you to address the weaknesses in the quality of education. Together with the trust, you and other leaders have reviewed the school's curriculum to ensure that it remains broad and balanced in key stage 3. Between Year 7 and Year 9, pupils now study an appropriately broad range of subjects.

Subject leaders have redesigned and rewritten their curriculum plans. They have used research to inform their curriculum planning and provided training for staff. They have identified the crucial knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember, including technical subject vocabulary. This is helping pupils know and remember more. This is the case in mathematics. For example, pupils spoke in detail about their knowledge of probability before moving on to problem solving.

You have ensured that reading is now a priority. Leaders have carefully selected a wide range of texts to strengthen pupils' love of reading. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the books they read in lessons and during tutor time. Leaders have implemented a new phonics reading programme to support struggling readers. Staff who deliver the school's reading programme have received specialist phonics training. Pupils who enter Year 7 unable to read well are quickly identified and they receive targeted support. This is helping them to catch up with learning to read. Leaders have plans in place to extend the training to more staff so that they know how to teach reading effectively.

You, other leaders and staff agree that some pupils' behaviour has notably declined since the pandemic. As a result, you have increased the social and emotional support for pupils. You, along with other leaders, continue to raise the expectations of all pupils. Consequently, pupils know what is expected of them and others. Pupils appreciate the changes to the behaviour policy. Still, there are a few pupils who do not behave well enough. You have suitable plans in place to address this.

You continue to promote high levels of pupil attendance. You and other leaders have implemented rigorous systems to check and monitor pupils' attendance. You have introduced rewards for pupils whose attendance is high enough. Pupils appreciate these incentives. Yet, attendance remains low. Too many pupils, including those with SEND, are persistently absent from school.

Governors have successfully managed a period of instability in the school's leadership team. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors acknowledge that there is further work to do to improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

Additional support

The trust has made a strong contribution to the development of the school since the last inspection. The trust's chief education officer provides frequent leadership support. Support from the trust subject directors has shaped useful training for subject leaders and teachers in most subjects, including mathematics. As a result, teachers are more confident in delivering the curriculum.

The trust has brokered support for middle leaders to visit other schools within the trust to learn from their good practice. This has been particularly beneficial to some middle leaders in strengthening their work. However, staffing changes and COVID-19 have meant that the support to date has not brought about consistent improvement since the previous inspection in all areas of middle leadership.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with the executive headteacher, the head of school and other senior leaders, including those with responsibility for safeguarding. I met the multi-academy trust chief executive officer, chief education officer, staff and

representatives of those responsible for governance. These meetings provided opportunities to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I completed a range of other inspection activities. I reviewed the school's single central record. I scrutinised documents, including the school's improvement plan, minutes from governors' meetings, behaviour and attendance records and curriculum plans. I met with a group of pupils from across different year groups.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of The Co-operative Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Jean Watt
Her Majesty's Inspector