

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 May 2024

Lindsey Burgin
Principal
Shirebrook Academy
Common Lane
Shirebrook
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
NG20 8QF

Dear Mrs Burgin

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Shirebrook Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 18 April 2024, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents and carers any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, other staff, trustees and governors the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited a sample of lessons in which I spoke with pupils and viewed their work. I held meetings with pupils and observed social times. In addition to this, I met with leaders responsible for overseeing pupils' behaviour and attendance as well as those responsible for the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). I reviewed the school's single central record and met with leaders to discuss the school's safeguarding arrangements. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

Main findings

Since the time of the last inspection, there have been changes to the personnel and structure of the leadership team. The current coordinator for the provision for pupils with SEND (SENCo) took up their post in September 2023. They have been joined by an assistant SENCo who started work at the school in the week of my visit. The senior leadership team, including the principal, were new in post at the time of the last inspection or have taken up their current roles since the previous inspection.

The school has placed significant emphasis on ensuring that all leaders have clarity about their roles and responsibilities. This emphasis has been combined with creating meaningful opportunities for leaders to collaborate. For example, pupils with SEND are supported with their learning, attendance and behaviour by staff who are aware of all the necessary context, as opposed to these areas being addressed each in isolation.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was challenged to improve the precision with which assessment information was gathered and used by teachers to ensure that pupils could build their knowledge. The school recognised that, for assessment processes to have the greatest positive impact on pupils, there first needed to be a review of the curriculum. This review has resulted in changes being made to the curriculum so that there are ambitious and well-sequenced series of lessons in place across all subjects. More recently, summative assessment systems have been introduced which check precisely what pupils know, remember and can do in the subjects they study. Teachers in core subjects, as well as humanities and modern foreign languages, analyse the information they gather about pupils' understanding and adapt future lessons to help pupils address misconceptions and build their knowledge.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They confidently model important concepts for pupils. Teachers have completed training about how to check pupils' understanding in lessons. In some lessons, teachers do not consistently identify gaps or misconceptions in pupils' knowledge. They do not always help pupils to move their learning on at the most appropriate point. The school knows developing teachers' practice in this area is a priority and has started to take action.

The school has significantly improved the provision for pupils with SEND. These pupils have their needs promptly and accurately identified. The school has ensured that staff have detailed information about pupils with SEND. Some teachers can confidently talk about how they use this information to adapt their lessons so that pupils with SEND can learn the curriculum alongside their peers. Some teachers do not always ensure that pupils, including those with SEND, receive the precise help that they need.

The school has prioritised reading. Staff check precisely how well pupils can read. Those pupils who need extra help benefit from support tailored to their needs. The school has adopted a phonics programme appropriate to pupils of secondary school age. This helps pupils to catch up with their peers and to access learning across the school's curriculum.

The school uses a range of reading strategies to help pupils develop their fluency and comprehension while studying subjects across the curriculum.

The school has taken a long-term and sustainable approach to school improvement. There are robust monitoring and evaluation systems in place. The school precisely identifies areas of strength and priorities for improvement. Actions are taken in a logical order to bring about improvement. This includes, for example, the changes made to developing the ambition and sequencing of the curriculum before improving the quality of checks on pupils' understanding.

The trust provides a range of effective support. Experts from the trust support leaders in relation to the provision for pupils with SEND and improving pupils' ability to read. The school has worked closely with the trust in developing assessment systems. Governors and trustees know the school well. They play an important role in holding leaders to account in addressing the school improvement priorities.

Pupils' behaviour has improved since the time of the previous inspection. In the sample of lessons I visited, most pupils were calm and focused on their learning. Older pupils talk about the improvements they have experienced in relation to behaviour. They say fewer lessons are disrupted. Pupils can discuss examples of where the school community has welcomed new pupils and shown respect for those from backgrounds different to themselves. Pupils say they form strong, positive relationships with staff. One pupil said of staff, 'You can build a connection to them.'

Staff share similarly positive views about the improvements in pupils' behaviour. They say that they feel supported by the school to manage pupils' behaviour. The school has introduced a provision called 'the Bridge' to help pupils improve their behaviour. This is having a positive impact on behaviour, with the number of pupils accessing this provision reducing. However, pupils continue to say that they experience disruptive behaviour, particularly in lessons that are not taught by permanent members of staff. Pupils say that they hear derogatory language. Suspensions and permanent exclusions are used appropriately but are not reducing in frequency as quickly as the school would like.

The school has improved pupils' attendance. Careful analysis of the reasons that some pupils do not attend as well as they could helps the school to identify strategies that will be effective in increasing attendance. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent, including those for sustained periods of time, has reduced. The school continues to prioritise further improvements in the attendance of the most vulnerable pupils.

When appropriate, advice from external experts is sought. The school values the input of external reviewers and school improvement partners. The school has used this support to reflect on various aspects of the provision, including the quality of the support for pupils with SEND.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO of Aston Community Education trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the

director of children's services for Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Fearn-Davies
His Majesty's Inspector