

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



2 July 2024

Anita Spires
Headteacher
Beechwood School
Long Readings Lane
Slough
Berkshire
SL2 1QE

Dear Miss Spires

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Beechwood School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 20 June 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 any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other leaders the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. I also met with members of the governing body and the board of trustees. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, scrutinised documents and spoke with pupils. 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 school's graded inspection in January 2023 there have been a number of changes to the governing body, including the appointment of a new chair of governors. The board of trustees has commissioned an external review of governance and this has been carried out.

This monitoring visit focused on the areas for improvement from the school's graded inspection. I looked at: the school's work on the curriculum and its implementation; leaders' actions to reduce persistent absence; and the role of governors in raising standards at the school.

Since the school's graded inspection, subject leaders have taken a fresh look at the curriculum in their subjects. They have worked with external experts and colleagues within the trust to review what pupils are taught and in what order. They have ensured that there are clear end points that are used to plan the curriculum and assess the progress that pupils are making. The school has trained all teachers in how to check pupils' understanding at each stage of the learning process. The use of these strategies is helping pupils to recall what they have learned previously. While this is being done consistently in most lessons, not all teachers use what they learn from this type of assessment to adapt their lesson delivery. Pupils' learning sometimes lacks depth because they are not provided with regular enough opportunities to apply their knowledge in different contexts, including through more open discussion and questioning.

With the support of the trust, leaders have focused on tackling the root causes of persistent absence. They have created a range of inclusive strategies to reduce the absence of particular pupil groups depending on their needs. This includes additional support for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to help these pupils attend school regularly and succeed. While these strategies have been effective, overall attendance remains below national average. Persistent absence is still too high and is preventing many pupils from benefiting fully from the curriculum.

Trustees and governors have clarified their roles and responsibilities in relation to the school. Following a review of governance, they have improved the way that they operate and hold leaders to account effectively. In addition to regular information from school leaders, the governing body receives reports from a range of external experts. Governors have used this information to establish a more accurate understanding of the school's performance. Governors offer support and challenge to leaders in relation to areas for development.

Senior leaders in school have worked hard to develop and empower middle leaders as part of the school's improvement journey. They have provided training and coaching, drawing on expertise within the school and trust. Leadership conversations at every level are now based on the substance of the curriculum and ensuring it is being learned by pupils. The extent to which the school has engaged with external support is a strength of its improvement work. With the support of the trust, leaders have built relationships with

other schools, professional organisations and curriculum experts to help evaluate and improve the effectiveness of their work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of trustees, the senior executive leader of The Schelwood Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Slough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Ellison
His Majesty's Inspector