

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 June 2018

Mrs Lisa Walton
Headteacher
The Ripley Academy
Peasehill
Ripley
Derbyshire
DE5 3JQ

Dear Mrs Walton

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Ripley Academy

Following my visit with Clare Considine, Ofsted Inspector, to the academy on 5 and 6 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in June 2017. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

I am of the opinion that the academy may seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in June 2017.

- Improve the quality of teaching across all year groups by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high enough expectations for what pupils can achieve across all subjects and year groups
 - plan activities that meet the needs of all groups of pupils effectively, especially the most able and those who are disadvantaged
 - use the school's systems for managing behaviour consistently well and that lessons consistently engage pupils in their learning
 - check carefully that pupils have learned and understood things before moving them on to the next topic.
- Raise achievement across the school, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that assessment information is accurate
 - ensuring that target setting and monitoring of pupils' progress is robust and aspirational, including in the sixth form
 - sharing current best practice within the school and across the trust effectively.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - evaluations made by leaders at all levels are accurate
 - subject leaders and those with other roles of responsibility have sufficient training and skills to carry out their roles effectively
 - external moderation of work across the trust is systematic and robust
 - the use of extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils is rigorously evaluated
 - the governing body and academy trust are more effective at holding leaders to account by checking more carefully that agreed actions have had sufficient impact.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 June 2018

Evidence

Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, members of support staff and a group of teachers. Inspectors also met with a governor, the school improvement team and the chief executive officer of the East Midlands Education Trust (EMET). Inspectors met with groups of pupils formally, and also spoke with pupils during lessons and around school.

Inspectors visited parts of 24 lessons with different senior leaders and discussed the strengths and weaknesses observed. An inspector looked at a large sample of pupils' work with a senior leader. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work in their lessons and spoke to them to evaluate the quality of their learning. The lead inspector also examined a large sample of pupils' assessments, which had been moderated by members of the trust's school improvement team. Inspectors observed two assemblies and visited five morning tutor sessions.

A number of documents were scrutinised, including records in relation to pupils' behaviour and attendance, their attainment and progress, and pastoral care. Inspectors read the minutes of meetings of the governing body and the board of trustees. They also looked at the school improvement plans. Arrangements for safeguarding were scrutinised, including the checks made on staff as part of the school's recruitment process.

Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers which were presented through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the minutes of the parent forum meetings held by school leaders.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, there have been limited changes to staffing. Two teachers have returned from maternity leave and a permanent head of computer science has joined the school.

In September, five new teachers are due to join the school, including the second in department in science. The school will be fully staffed in September 2018.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher continues to provide strong leadership. She is rightly proud of the considerable improvements that were evident at the last monitoring visit but she has not been complacent. She is realistic about the school's strengths and the areas in need of further development. She recognises much work remains to be done and is taking effective action to bring about the necessary improvements. Leaders are

committed to providing the best possible education for pupils and continue to hold pupils' interests at the heart of their work. A strong sense of moral purpose underpins all they do.

The headteacher has maintained high expectations for all. There is a clear vision which is understood by pupils, staff and parents. All are keen to support the headteacher in her uncompromising drive for further improvement.

Following the last monitoring visit, leaders wrote an immediate action plan to build on the improvements that were evident and to address the areas that urgently needed attention. These plans are clearly understood by all and focus on the school's key priorities. In addition, leaders have identified further priorities to support and enhance the overall quality of education provided by the school. They regularly review the impact of their work, adapting plans accordingly. Actions are carefully considered and reasoned. There is a clear rationale for all that happens in the school. Leaders collaborate extremely well. They understand how their work affects that of others and have established a joined-up approach to school improvement.

Senior leaders have supported the development of subject leaders through training and coaching. For example, heads of department have participated in regular and intensive training in how to evaluate the quality of the work of their departments. The programme to support heads of department has been measured and carefully planned to both meet individual development needs and to build on their learning as their professional development continues. Heads of department are now taking greater responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of their departments and holding staff to account. They have also been involved in developing whole-school initiatives, such as the recently introduced model for structuring lessons. They are positive about their influence on school improvement, and are keen to develop further. The overall effectiveness of heads of department has improved but inconsistencies in the quality of leadership remain. Senior leaders are aware of the need to continue to support and challenge less effective middle leaders.

There has been continued work to build on the improvements in teaching, learning and assessment evident at the last monitoring visit. The concept of 'pitch, pace and activity' has been strengthened by the introduction of a new framework, which specifies a clear structure of lessons. This provides clarity for both teachers and pupils, and ensures that the focus remains clearly on pupils' learning and progress.

Assessment is becoming increasingly accurate. Extensive moderation has taken place, both internally and across the trust. The system for target-setting has been further simplified and clarified. Pupils' targets are clearly identified and they are used as a point of reference in lessons.

Leaders have provided more opportunities for staff to share best practice. For example, there are weekly morning briefings, and an after-school teaching and

learning forum where teachers discuss and share good practice. There are also a number of informal means to share ideas. For example, staff collate information about effective practice in 'the spotty book', which is passed around from department to department. In addition, the trust has provided effective developmental support for teaching staff through coaching and training. Staff are appreciative of the professional development they receive. They feel valued and extremely well supported.

Leaders have begun to implement the recommendations of the external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding. Funding is now allocated to specific activities and carefully tracked. At the time of the monitoring visit, leaders were beginning to evaluate the impact of specific strategies. This will inform their planning for the use of the funding for the next academic year. All aspects of the school's work pay close regard to meeting disadvantaged pupils' needs and improving their rates of progress and raising their attainment. For example, leaders, including heads of department, carry out monitoring activities to check that teaching staff are meeting the expectations of the 'classroom entitlement', the school's strategy for meeting disadvantaged pupils' needs in lessons. When teachers do not meet expectations, they are challenged and supported to ensure that their practice in this area improves. Monitoring information indicates that this is having a positive impact on the application of this agreed approach. Leaders are now held to account for this aspect of the school's work by the linked governor, who scrutinises and challenges their work. Leaders recognise the need to significantly improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, and this remains a key priority. The school's use of the pupil premium and the impact of other aspects of the school's work on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes will be explored at the next monitoring visit.

Plans are in place for new arrangements for the leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities from September 2018. Improving outcomes for this group of pupils remains a key priority. The impact of the changes in leadership and provision, including the effectiveness of teaching assistants, will be evaluated at the next monitoring visit.

Leaders have continued to work closely with parents. The headteacher holds regular meetings to update parents on the school's progress and to seek their feedback. Leaders, including middle leaders, work successfully to incorporate their views into their plans and to respond to their concerns. For example, parents have queried the effectiveness of homework. This has been incorporated into a whole-school area for development for the next academic year. One of the heads of house has worked with parents to encourage a greater proportion to attend parents' evenings. This has led to a considerable increase in attendance. The head of school has also held 'clinics', into which parents can book, to discuss aspects of the school and their child's progress and welfare. The headteacher is keen to continue to work with parents and to encourage their further involvement in the school's work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

There are clear improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment but it remains inconsistent between and within departments. The vast majority of teachers plan lessons according to the recently developed model. Inspectors noted that teachers were incorporating 'progress checks' into their lessons. In most cases, this supported pupils' learning. For example, in a food technology lesson, the 'progress check' revealed that some pupils had some misconceptions. The teacher was thus able to adapt the lesson to ensure that pupils understood before moving onto the next activity. Leaders have identified individual staff who would benefit from further support to ensure that their use of the teaching model leads to pupils making accelerated progress.

Most teachers have high expectations of what pupils are able to achieve and inspectors noted a suitable degree of challenge in many lessons. Increasingly, teachers follow the school's policy of referring to pupils' targets when directing pupils towards activities. When learning is most effective, teachers ensure that pupils undertake activities which match their levels of ability. However, there is still variability in the extent to which teachers routinely plan activities which meet the needs of different groups of learners. In particular, the most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Sometimes, the most able pupils are not moved onto more challenging work quickly enough. The work that has been undertaken in this area has had a positive effect on teachers' practice. However, ensuring the better achievement of the most able pupils remains a priority for the school.

Many teachers use questioning skilfully to probe pupils' understanding and to help them to develop their reasoning. However, as leaders have identified, some teachers do not allow pupils the time they need to think through their responses, or do not help them to draw out their understanding.

At the time of the last monitoring visit, leaders had introduced a new assessment and feedback policy. This has been adapted by different departments, and leaders are keen to support autonomy in developing practice that suits different subjects. However, teachers do not consistently apply the assessment and feedback policy agreed within their department. There is variability in the effectiveness of these policies. Sometimes pupils do not understand how to improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The concept of 'precious learning time' has been further embedded. Pupils have responded well to leaders' expectations that time in lessons is spent productively and with a focus on learning. Pupils arrive promptly to lessons and behave well. In the vast majority of classes, instances of low-level disruption are rare. When teaching does not meet the needs of individual pupils, some become distracted and lose concentration. However, this does not result in the disruption of learning to others. Pupils say that behaviour has improved but they note that behaviour is not

good in some lessons. Pupils conduct themselves extremely well at unstructured times and around school. For example, during the monitoring visit, an unscheduled fire evacuation took place. Pupils' conduct was exemplary. All were accounted for quickly and pupils returned to their classes promptly and immediately refocused on their learning.

Heads of house, supported by student support coordinators, monitor pupils' behaviour and provide well-targeted support. The number of incidents of poor behaviour has reduced further since the last monitoring visit and the use of internal isolation has reduced considerably. The proportion of pupils who have been temporarily excluded from school has also reduced.

Strong pastoral leadership and the work of the heads of house have contributed to increased rates of attendance. Absence, including that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, has continued to decline and is now similar to national averages.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. For example, they learn about the potential dangers of radicalisation, sexting and grooming. The tutor and assembly programme encourages pupils to reflect on a range of issues, such as diversity. Plans are in place to update the personal, social, health and economic curriculum to ensure that current issues, pertinent to the local area, are fully explored. All pupils in key stage 4 receive individual careers education, information, advice and guidance interviews. The headteacher has identified the need to develop this for younger pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Raised expectations and improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' progress and attainment, particularly for younger pupils. Leaders recognise that the legacy of poor teaching in the past will take time to overcome. They have taken action to improve outcomes for current Year 11 pupils through intensive additional support, and expect that outcomes, especially in English and mathematics, will improve. The impact of the work to improve the quality of education for all pupils in the school will be explored at the next monitoring visit through the scrutiny of examination results in 2018.

External support

At the time of the last monitoring visit, the support from the trust had increased considerably since the full inspection in June 2017. This has been maintained and increased further. Trust directors of English, mathematics and science work closely with heads of department, providing effective support and challenge. Support is bespoke to each department's need and is highly valued by heads of department. All subject leaders have participated in trust-wide moderation of Year 11 pupils'

assessments. Leaders, at all levels, are extremely appreciative of the support they have received. They are unanimous in their agreement of the value it has had in improving the school.