

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Gemma Simon
Principal
Hillsview Academy
Normanby Road
South Bank
Middlesbrough
TS6 9AG

Dear Mrs Simon

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hillsview Academy

Following my visit with Carl Sugden, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 26–27 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 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.

Having considered all the evidence, the school may 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 Redcar and Cleveland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Leaders and governors should take action to rapidly improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing and strengthening leadership at all levels so that all leaders are effectively evaluating the success of their actions to improve outcomes for pupils
 - monitoring and evaluating the use of additional funds for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who need to catch up so that spending is precisely targeted and improves outcomes for these pupils.
- Leaders and governors should improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school by:
 - ensuring that teachers have the highest expectations of what all pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons carefully to meet the needs of all pupils, so that all pupils make good progress from their starting points
 - improving and embedding the new behaviour system so that it is applied consistently by all teachers and disruption to learning rapidly reduces
 - implementing an effective whole-school literacy strategy so that pupils improve their spelling, punctuation, reading and extended writing.
- Leaders and governors should urgently improve attendance, behaviour and pupil welfare by:
 - eradicating internal truancy and preventing pupils from smoking on site
 - reducing the number of behaviour incidents and fixed-term exclusions
 - reducing persistent absence and improving attendance for all groups of pupils, particularly for those who are disadvantaged, and for students in the sixth form
 - improving the quality of the provision for personal, social, health and economic education so that all pupils in the school and students in the sixth form receive education to prepare them for their futures.
- Leaders and governors should take urgent action to ensure that safeguarding is effective by:
 - ensuring that records of bullying, attendance issues and referrals are detailed and reference action taken and associated impact

- ensuring that pupils move safely around the building without running, pushing or shoving.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 26 June 2018 to 27 June 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents. Inspectors met with the principal and members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors met with a group of staff and middle leaders. Inspectors also met with pupils from all year groups and talked to pupils informally during lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour on corridors and at the start and end of the school day. Two telephone calls were held with the national director of secondary schools of the Academies Enterprise Trust. Meetings were held with the chair of the governing body and three representatives from the trust. Inspectors scrutinised work in pupils' books. A phone call was held with the deputy headteacher from the alternative education provider, where a group of pupils receive their education for part of the week.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, the trust has appointed a new principal. Ten teachers will leave the school at the end of this term. The school has a full cohort of staff in place for the start of the new school year.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new principal has ensured that the areas for improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection are being addressed with more urgency. She is resolute in her determination to improve the school. Staff are fully behind her and a large majority of pupils talk positively about the changes she has made in a relatively short period of time.

Middle leaders are clearer about their roles and responsibilities. They are being held to account more effectively. Middle leaders told inspectors that they feel more positive about the future of the school. Staff morale has also improved.

Middle leaders are now more effective at checking the progress made by pupils in their subjects. As a result, middle leaders show a greater understanding of the specific groups of pupils who are at risk of underachieving. Middle leaders are also checking more effectively on the quality of teaching. They told inspectors that they are dealing less with poor behaviour; therefore, they can focus on improving the quality of teaching. Consequently, the quality of teaching is beginning to show signs of improvement.

The use of catch-up funding to support Year 7 pupils' literacy and numeracy is now showing impact. The leader responsible for this funding is fully accountable for the

impact of this work. As a result, there is evidence that identified pupils have made better progress in literacy and numeracy since the start of Year 7.

Funding to support pupils who are disadvantaged is not showing the same positive impact as Year 7 catch-up funding. Leaders know that there is further work to do to ensure that funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to improve their outcomes and attendance. This funding is still not effectively reviewed. The chair of governors is aware of this and has plans in place to audit more rigorously the effectiveness and impact of its use.

Provision for pupils who have special education needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has improved since the last section 5 inspection. Strategies to support these pupils have been shared with teachers. However, inspectors did not see this translate into consistently effective support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in their lessons. Targets developed from education, health and care plans lack clarity about precise actions needed to support pupils.

Leaders ensure that there are detailed records of safeguarding and bullying incidents. Any follow-up actions are also recorded. This enables leaders to identify any trends or emerging issues. The school works with a range of outside agencies to support pupils and families. Consequently, pupils receive support when needed.

Governors now hold leaders more effectively to account. The chair of governors is an experienced professional chair. He is clear about the urgent priorities for improvement. Governors visit the school more regularly and talk to pupils and staff about the impact of actions in the school improvement plan. They recognise the improvements that have been made since the last monitoring visit. However, they are also realistic about the work that still needs to be done towards the removal of special measures.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is beginning to show signs of improvement. Expectations have been raised since the last monitoring visit. Pupils are expected to have their equipment and planners on their desk at the start of the lesson, so that they are ready to learn. This was witnessed in most lessons by inspectors.

Leaders are addressing weak teaching more effectively. Plans to support teachers are detailed, and there is evidence that this is helping some teachers to improve their practice. Pupils are being challenged more in their learning, particularly high prior attaining pupils. However, expectations in some lessons are still too low. As a result, the quality of teaching, although improving, remains variable.

Pupils expressed concern about the number of temporary teachers they have had in some subjects this year, for example in Year 10 geography. They told inspectors this has had a negative impact on their learning and progress. However, leaders

have addressed this and have a full cohort of permanent staff in place from September 2018.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inspectors talked to a number of pupils during the inspection. Most pupils told inspectors that behaviour has improved since the arrival of the new principal. Since the last monitoring visit, leaders have introduced a one-way system on corridors. Pupils told inspectors that they do not like this new system. However, it is helping to reduce incidents of poor behaviour on corridors. More staff are on corridors during lesson changeover. This is leading to any incidents being dealt with more quickly.

Since the last monitoring visit, the number of pupils removed from lessons has reduced further. Punctuality to school has improved markedly. Leaders are on duty at the school gate at the start of the day. They address any uniform issues before pupils enter the school. As a result, standards of uniform have improved. Internal truancy has also reduced significantly and is almost eradicated.

Despite improvements in behaviour, some pupils, especially younger pupils, told inspectors that some lessons are still disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour needs to improve further as there are still some pupils who are disruptive. In some lessons, inspectors witnessed low-level disruption. This impacts negatively on pupils' learning. Teachers have to work hard to keep pupils on task. Inspectors observed too many pupils giving up on activities too easily. This is reflected in pupils' books, where there are still too many instances of pupils not completing their work fully. This leads to gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders acknowledge that there is still work to do to improve behaviour further.

Pupils told inspectors that incidents of bullying have reduced since the last monitoring visit. More is being done to educate pupils about bullying and the impact of bullying. However, some pupils told inspectors that bullying is not dealt with quickly enough at times.

Fixed-term exclusions have reduced further since the last monitoring visit. However, the number of pupils excluded this academic year remains unacceptably high and well above the national average. Exclusions remain particularly high for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders, governors and the trust recognise that reducing exclusions needs to be addressed with increasing urgency.

Since the last monitoring visit, there have been some minor improvements in pupils' attendance. Systems for monitoring attendance are robust. Pupils told inspectors that staff have raised the profile and importance of good attendance through rewards and competitions. However, rates of attendance remain too low. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is particularly low. The number of pupils who are regularly absent from school has increased this year. Pupils taking holidays in term

time, and the high rates of fixed-term exclusions, have a negative impact on overall attendance rates. Leaders, governors and the trust acknowledge that pupils' attendance rates remain a significant concern. They understand that the impact of their actions to address poor attendance needs to show more rapid improvement. Poor attendance has a detrimental effect on pupils' progress.

Leaders have ensured that the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme addresses the issues that pupils may face in their community. Pupils told inspectors that they learn about a range of topics, for example the dangers of drugs and alcohol, online predators and child sexual exploitation. However, pupils told inspectors that there is not enough time to discuss and explore issues and topics, as PSHE is delivered through morning registration. Leaders know that this is an issue and have plans in place to improve how the PSHE programme is delivered from September 2018.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders acknowledge that there is unlikely to be a marked improvement in Year 11 pupil outcomes this year, due to a legacy of poor teaching. However, Year 10 pupils are making better progress, particularly high prior attaining pupils. From scrutiny of the work in pupils' books, it is evident that high prior attaining pupils have more opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum, and expectations set by teachers are higher.

Middle and low prior attaining pupils' progress is often hampered by poorly developed literacy skills. There is still no consistent approach to the teaching of literacy across the school. Therefore, middle and low prior attaining pupils are making less progress than high prior attaining pupils.

Although actions to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have been identified and shared with staff, teachers do not consistently use these strategies to support pupils in lessons. Therefore, the progress made by these pupils remains variable.

External support

The trust is now taking effective action to support the school. At the previous monitoring visits, the school was judged not to be taking effective action to be removed from its category of concern, special measures. The trust has appointed a new principal since the previous monitoring visit who has had a clear impact on school improvement.

A system leader from the trust is working with the school on a weekly basis to improve behaviour. This is showing impact with improvement in pupils' behaviour on corridors, improved uniform compliance, and a marked reduction in the number of pupils late to school. However, the trust recognises the need to ensure a

significant reduction in the number of pupils excluded from school. This remains a crucial priority for the trust and the school.

Support has also been provided from the trust for middle leaders to raise expectations. This is showing impact. Middle leaders are now more accountable for improving the quality of teaching in their subjects. However, leaders recognise there is more work to do to ensure accuracy of teacher assessment and raise standards of teaching further, so that pupils receive a more consistently positive experience.