

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



29 November 2018

Mrs Emma Tovey
Barton Hill Academy
Queen Ann Road
Barton Hill
Bristol
BS5 9TX

Dear Mrs Tovey

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Barton Hill Academy

Following my visit to your school on 16 November 2018 with Julie Carrington, HMI, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in September 2017. 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 actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of Venturers Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bristol City. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nathan Kemp
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders:
 - implement the school’s agreed approaches to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment consistently to rapidly raise standards and improve pupils’ progress
 - provide training for subject leaders so that they take greater responsibility in raising standards across the curriculum
 - check the effectiveness of the work of teaching assistants to ensure that they support pupils effectively to make good progress
 - rigorously check that staff apply the school’s behaviour policy so that learning is not affected.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve, especially the most able
 - teachers assess pupils’ progress accurately and have a clear understanding of what pupils need to learn next
 - teachers adapt learning in lessons and, where work is too easy or too hard, amend activities appropriately
 - phonics teaching is regular, consistently of the highest quality, and phonics learning is accurately assessed so that pupils, especially boys, do not fall behind
 - teachers and support staff consistently address pupils’ misunderstanding when learning basic skills in reading and mathematics.
- Improve early years provision by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan activities to enable children to make strong progress from their starting points, especially boys
 - staff develop the range of resources to reflect children’s cultural backgrounds and so support their learning.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 16 November 2018

Evidence

Inspectors visited classrooms and scrutinised pupils' writing and mathematics workbooks. Inspectors met with the principal to discuss progress since the previous monitoring visit and discuss the current improvement priorities. Inspectors also met with members of the leadership team, including the early years leader, key stage phase leaders and the mathematics and literacy leaders. In addition, inspectors met with leaders to discuss the school's behaviour processes and consider records for behaviour and exclusions. Inspectors also met with members of the school's governing body and the chief executive officer from Venturers Trust.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, staffing has been stable. Since the school had 10 new teachers join the team in September 2017, leaders have enjoyed a less turbulent turnover of staff.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Support for the school has been effective: the trust's involvement in supporting the local governing body has led to increased accountability, greater strategic direction and more diligent checks on the school's performance. The trust has also supported the school in securing greater capacity across its leadership team, including the appointment of a second vice principal.

The principal has high expectations of all pupils. Her focus on raising achievement has sent clear messages to all staff that pupils can and should be making better progress from their starting points. Senior leaders closely monitor pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, accepting no excuses for underachievement. Through this focus, an increasing proportion of pupils are working at age-related expectations.

The chair of governors is proving instrumental in developing governors' knowledge and understanding of the school's current performance. The governing body now requests detailed analysis about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment from school leaders. This provides them with the required information to evaluate the extent of progress against the school's agreed improvement priorities.

Phase leaders regularly monitor pupils' progress through a half-termly scrutiny of assessment information and the school's pupil progress meetings. They have an increasing understanding of pupils' attainment and progress and talk knowledgeably about where progress is strongest. However, they are not yet making best use of the information they have to support teachers in planning activities closely matched to pupils' abilities.

The mathematics and literacy leaders have an increased awareness of the standards in their subjects. They can identify where teaching is strongest and where improvements are needed. Through the school's drive to establish 'non-negotiables', they are bringing greater consistency.

The new leader for pupils who speak English as an additional language is already making strides to undertake a full assessment of all pupils' needs. Since taking up the role in September, she has ensured that interventions are more closely matched to pupils' needs. However, pupils are not regularly challenged to speak in English and extend their English vocabulary in day-to-day teaching.

The phonics leader has brought about much needed improvements since the previous monitoring visit. She has influenced improvements in teaching, learning and assessment and has a clear grasp of pupils' progress. She uses this information well to inform groupings and to direct support where necessary. This has resulted in a greater proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected in the Year 1 phonics screening check.

Leaders' actions to improve pupils' progress and attainment are paying off and are showing sustained improvements. In key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving well, sometimes at the higher standard, is rising. This is because teaching is more closely focused on pupils' needs and is increasingly challenging, resulting in improved progress, particularly in reading and mathematics.

Similarly, by the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils showing improved achievement/achieving well rose in reading, writing and mathematics. While reading and writing outcomes still require improvement, progress is now stronger. However, most success is seen in the rising number of pupils working at higher standards. In 2018, the proportion of pupils working at the higher standard was above the national average in reading and writing and in line in mathematics.

Teaching, learning and assessment

The work of phase leaders is ensuring that, through regular moderation of work, teachers' assessments are increasingly accurate. This is true, for example, of teachers' summary assessments of number in mathematics. The leader of phonics has developed precise assessments of what pupils know, can do and understand in phonics. Teachers in Year 1 use this information well to plan work that meets pupils' needs. As a result, pupils increasingly use and apply their spelling of words accurately in their writing. However, some aspects of teachers' ongoing assessment are not as effective. For example, teachers praise pupils for including adventurous vocabulary in their writing but some pupils use words that they do not fully understand, and they make word choices that are not successful, and this slows their progress in writing. In addition, teachers are not yet ensuring that pupils who have limited speaking skills have the confidence to ask for help when they need it.

As a result, some pupils with low prior attainment or limited speaking skills sit and wait for an adult to notice that they have stopped working. In their writing, pupils often use words out of context, making their writing confusing to read. Teachers do not pay close enough attention to these misconceptions, so these errors repeat over time.

The teaching of reading is improving steadily. As a result, most pupils read with increased accuracy and can use their phonics skills to decode words. Teaching now provides pupils with more challenging questions about the text they read. While pupils have plenty of opportunities to pick out key words and information from a text they have read, they find it more problematic when staff ask them to make inferences about what they have read.

In mathematics, pupils have spent a significant amount of time developing their knowledge of number, including place value, and performing operations such as addition and subtraction. However, pupils do not have consistent opportunities to embed their mathematical skills through reasoning activities and solving problems.

Early years provision

Children in Reception experience a wide range of activities to develop their basic skills. Children are encouraged to write and apply their knowledge and skills of key words and basic phonics. However, when children attempt to express themselves and speak with others, they do so in short phrases and are not challenged regularly enough to extend their responses into full sentences. Too often, staff accept children's short responses, often only two or three words long, without providing support or modelling to help them develop further or correct errors.

Information about children's attainment on entry to the school is inaccurate. Despite a vast proportion of children clearly beginning the academic year well below what is typical for their age in aspects such as speaking and writing, this is not reflected in the school's assessment information. This impacts on staff's ability to provide activities closely matched to children's learning needs. This is more evident in the Nursery provision, where there is a lack of speaking opportunities, particularly for boys, with few or no opportunities to engage in discussion.

External support

School leaders have benefited from moderation opportunities with other schools in the trust. This has provided them with an opportunity to share pupils' work and make comparisons with other pupils in local schools and ascertain whether pupils are making appropriate progress.