

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 February 2022

Damian Belshaw
Principal
Waseley Hills High School
School Road
Rubery
Birmingham
West Midlands
B45 9EL

Dear Mr Belshaw

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Waseley Hills High School

Following my visit to your school on 20 January 2022, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received a requires improvement judgement at its previous section 5 inspection.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure the consistent implementation of the school's new curriculum across all subjects

- ensure that teachers are provided with accurate information and strategies to help support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively
- improve behaviour by ensuring that all staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the school has undergone several significant changes. The school joined the Central Region Schools Trust in November 2021. Prior to this, the trust had worked closely with the school to provide support and undertake various external reviews.

You were appointed as principal in January 2022. An executive principal from another local school in the trust is overseeing you in your new role. A new assistant principal has been seconded to the school by the trust, and took up post in January 2022.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has caused some disruption, the trust has found ways to ensure that work to improve the school continues.

Main findings

Following the previous inspection, the school went into a period of decline. This had a particularly detrimental impact on the quality of education and pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. You recognise this. Trust leaders have a clear and candid view of what the school needs to do to improve. In a short space of time, you have worked together with leaders from across the trust to take action. This is already starting to show some success.

New leaders quickly identified the need to improve the curriculum. Leaders have moved the school back to a three-year key stage 3 curriculum. This is providing more time to help deepen and secure pupils' knowledge and understanding across different subjects. Trust leaders have carried out reviews in all core subjects. These reviews have identified specific aspects of the curriculum that need to improve. Subject leaders are benefiting from the support of the trust in co-designing the new curriculum. Staff are positive about the impact the trust is having.

Subject leaders are working closely in subject networks across the trust to look at strengthening the curriculum. New curriculum guidance is well sequenced. It is clear how intended learning builds over time so that pupils become secure in what they know. Further work has also taken place to strengthen the school's approach to assessment. Leaders have identified opportunities to check work with other schools in the trust, to ensure that pupils receive more consistent and accurate feedback. However, leaders recognise that there is further work to do. Changes to curriculum guidance are still very new and, currently, are not being implemented consistently across different subjects.

You have rightly prioritised the need to ensure greater consistency in the way that teachers check pupils' understanding. You have introduced 'do now' activities at the start of lessons, when teachers recap prior learning so that pupils remember it. You have also introduced checks at the end of lessons. These are intended to help teachers identify what pupils know, and where errors and misconceptions might persist. Staff are positive about the impact of these changes.

As recommended at the previous inspection, leaders have reviewed the effectiveness of their pupil premium spending. Leaders have used evidence from research and have collaborated across the trust to help identify barriers to learning. You have also put a strategy plan in place to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are now regularly checking how this money is spent. They have ensured that teachers have a better understanding of the most effective ways to support disadvantaged pupils in the classroom.

You recognise that there is still more work to do in order to improve other aspects of the school's work. The provision for pupils with SEND needs to be better. Teachers are not always given the most accurate information about these pupils' needs. Furthermore, teachers do not know enough about how to support pupils with SEND, so that they make the best possible progress. The trust's recent review of the provision for pupils with SEND recognises this. You have plans in place to improve these aspects.

You also recognise that pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning need to be more positive. Pupils do not behave consistently well in lessons, and some teachers do not challenge the use of derogatory language. This can mean that some pupils' experiences of school are negative. You are taking steps to address this.

Trustees and governors have a strong understanding of the school's current position. The trust is committed to ensuring that the school improves and is fully supportive of the work that has already taken place. A new local academy governing board is providing more effective support and challenge for leaders. Governors are given regular updates on the work that is taking place, and are keen to help drive further improvements.

Additional support

The trust has provided extensive support for the school, through its trust improvement team and a number of external consultants. A school improvement partner has carried out a recent review of pupils' behaviour. In addition, a school improvement consultant has undertaken reviews of all core subjects. These consultants have also provided training for subject leaders. The trust has also used the support of a specialist leader in education, who is working in the school once a week to provide support in English. Prior to joining the trust, the school arranged a safeguarding review.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the principal. I also met with other senior leaders, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer, pupils, staff, and representatives of those responsible for governance, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I also held meetings with subject leaders to discuss curriculum plans. I looked at information on the school's website and scrutinised documents relating to school improvement work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Central Region Schools Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Howes
Her Majesty's Inspector