

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



4 July 2018

Mr Ben Driver
Ormiston Denes Academy
Yarmouth Road
Lowestoft
Suffolk
NR32 4AH

Dear Mr Driver

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ormiston Denes Academy

Following my visit to your school on 20 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- make sure that middle leaders use the skills and information they now have to strategically lead the work of teachers
- ensure that teachers consistently understand and cater for the different needs of pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged
- develop the teaching of literacy across the school
- improve behaviour so that it is consistently good, including continuing to reduce the amount of exclusions pupils receive and making sure that all pupils are confident that any concerns they have will be consistently well dealt with.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, middle leaders, governors and the national director of education for the trust, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke with a range of pupils, both in their free time and during an organised meeting. I visited eight lessons, accompanied by leaders, and reviewed the work of pupils in their books. I reviewed a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school, their improvement plans, governing body minutes and leaders' evaluations of spending. I considered the 91 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and a complaint received prior to the inspection.

Context

Ormiston Denes Academy is part of the Ormiston Academies Trust. The school has a larger-than-average proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals. It has a larger-than-average proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and pupils with an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.

Since the last inspection of the school, new appointments have been made to the senior leadership team and the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders have been updated. There have also been changes in the leadership of some subject areas.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you have taken effective steps to secure improved provision for pupils who attend the school.

Pupils' achievement is now stronger than it was. Because of the actions you have taken to monitor, challenge and support teachers, the quality of teaching across the school is better than in the past. You have a secure understanding of where teaching is strongest and of where it needs to develop further. You provide training for teachers and you are firm in upholding your high expectations of what happens in the classroom. Where teaching is most effective, teachers are ambitious for all pupils, and pupils are supported to make good progress over time.

Pupils who are identified by leaders as needing to develop their literacy skills now make more rapid progress in reading and writing than in the past. This is because, in addition to their normal lessons, they are given extra support. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities also make better progress in some areas because programmes are in place to target some of their individual needs.

The progress made by disadvantaged pupils improved notably at the end of key stage 4 in 2017. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils' progress was significantly below the

national average. In 2017, it was broadly in line with average in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. This is because of the range of targeted support you gave them, such as providing mentors and running a Saturday school. Their progress was not as strong in subjects such as science and modern foreign languages.

You have continued to provide these high levels of support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils whose literacy skills are weak. They continue to make better progress than in the past because of this. However, while teaching has improved, teachers do not consistently understand and meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Literacy is not typically taught well across the school. You recognise there is more to do to ensure teaching is of a consistently high standard across the school.

You have supported and trained middle leaders to oversee the work of their departments more effectively. They undertake regular learning walks and check on the progress of pupils in their books. You have introduced a new school-wide assessment system which enables leaders to review the progress of classes and groups of pupils. Middle leaders have been trained on how to feed back their assessment of teachers' work to teachers effectively. They have access to information about pupils, so they know the needs which teachers should be catering for.

While middle leadership has improved, you and middle leaders recognise that they do not currently use the information and skills they now have to strategically lead the work of teachers.

The improvement in pupils' development, behaviour and welfare is marked. You have successfully reduced the proportion of pupils who are excluded for poor behaviour. This includes a reduction in the rate of exclusions for both disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Due to your careful monitoring, pupils whose behaviour is of concern are given guidance and support earlier than before. This means fewer of them behave in a way which warrants exclusion. The proportion of pupils excluded is still higher than the national average, but is falling rapidly.

You have streamlined the system for managing behaviour in lessons. This has successfully reduced the amount of lesson time lost to disruptive behaviour. Middle leaders told me how effective this has been. They say it has enabled teachers to focus on helping pupils to make better progress. Pupils I spoke with also said that there is not much disruption to learning. They said that expectations are clear and that behaviour is much better than it was. Pupils also told me that behaviour around the school has improved.

My own observations in lessons and around the school at breaktime and lunchtime support what pupils and middle leaders told me. There is much positive behaviour.

However, on occasions, when learning is not interesting enough, pupils do still become distracted. There is still some inappropriate behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. While most pupils feel that there is not much bullying, some feel their concerns are not followed up as well as they could be.

Your work to improve attendance has been successful. Attendance levels are now above the national average. You use strategies such as fortnightly attendance focus sessions for pupils and rewards for good attendance to instil an understanding of the importance of good attendance. Heads of house now focus more on attendance than in the past. You communicate the importance of good attendance to parents. As a result, attendance has improved, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.

External support

You work well with the Ormiston Academies Trust and value the support it provides. An adviser from the trust has previously worked with senior leaders to help monitor and develop teaching across the school. Now this help is given directly to middle leaders. It has helped them to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to observe lessons and review pupils' work in a meaningful way. They now know how to guide teachers more effectively.

Staff have had the opportunity to develop their skills by working with people from other schools in the trust. For example, teaching assistants from this school spent time with teaching assistants from another school to compare their ways of working. Teachers and middle leaders benefit from working together across schools to check the accuracy of their assessments.

With governors, trustees have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They use meetings to determine what is going well and where further support is needed. This enables the trust to provide support which is focused on the areas of greatest need. This is effective in helping you to develop the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Hemmings
Her Majesty's Inspector