

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Steven Stafford
Headteacher
The John Curwen Co-operative Primary Academy
Leeds Old Road
Heckmondwike
West Yorkshire
WF16 9BB

Dear Mr Stafford

Special measures monitoring inspection of The John Curwen Co-operative Primary Academy

Following my visit with Alison Ashworth, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 March 2019, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2018. 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 I strongly recommend that the school does not 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 Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2018.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons, particularly the most able
 - improving the accuracy and consistency of teachers' assessments of pupils' progress
 - closely defining the role played by educational teaching assistants (ETAs) in classrooms so that they effectively support pupils' needs
 - ensuring that feedback given to pupils is in line with the school's own policies and enables pupils to improve their work.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - developing more effective strategies to improve pupils' attendance overall and to decrease the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school
 - improving the curriculum so that pupils develop a better understanding of different faiths and cultures, particularly those represented within the school locality
 - providing pupils with a wider range of opportunities to report incidents of bullying to staff and further developing the curriculum so that pupils are clear about how to identify bullying behaviour.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - increasing the progress made by disadvantaged pupils by carefully focusing the use of pupil premium funding
 - accelerating the progress made by the most able pupils by increasing the levels of challenge in the work set for this group.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders have sufficient time to lead and manage the school
 - increasing the effectiveness of systems currently in place to monitor and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - refocusing targets within the current school development plan so that they more closely match the areas in need of improvement
 - increasing the accuracy of systems in place to measure pupils' progress
 - implementing effective training to help staff to improve pupils' attendance more rapidly

- developing stronger relationships with hard-to-reach families to improve pupils' attendance.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be carried out.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 12 March 2019 to 13 March 2019

Evidence

During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with a range of colleagues at school, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and phase leaders. Meetings also took place with a colleague with responsibility for the use of the pupil premium, and the two special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs). The lead inspector met with members of the local governing body (LGB). Some of these governors are also trustees of the Y-OUR Co-operative Academies Trust, which is the trust with current responsibility for the school. Safeguarding arrangements were checked, and the system used to ensure that adults in school are safe to work with children was scrutinised. An inspector spoke to colleagues responsible for safeguarding and checking attendance. Development plans as presented by the trust and the school were considered, as were documents relating to the quality of the curriculum and the monitoring of teaching. Recent reports that have been presented to the LGB were considered.

Inspectors conducted joint observations in lessons with school leaders and looked at pupils' work in exercise books. They talked to pupils formally in meetings and informally at break and lunchtime. In addition, an inspector spoke to parents and carers at the beginning of the school day. An inspector visited the rainbow room, a space for pupils who need additional emotional or behavioural support.

Context

Since the first monitoring visit in September 2018 a new permanent headteacher has been appointed. The new headteacher has been in post since January 2019. As a stand-alone academy within a multi-academy trust structure, the school is currently part of the Y-OUR Co-operative Academies Trust. The intention is that the school will become a member of the Co-op Academies Trust (CAT) in September 2019. Both trusts were involved in the appointment of the new headteacher. The intention is that the school will become a member of the CAT in September 2019. Colleagues who were in acting positions before the appointment of the headteacher have returned to their substantive roles. The leadership team is now fully staffed. In addition, the role of phase leaders has been changed. The three phase leaders are now responsible for: early years and key stage 1; key stage 2; and the progress that disadvantaged pupils make.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders have wasted no time since the first monitoring visit in improving the quality of education at the school. Acting leaders at that time moved quickly to develop systems to check the progress that pupils make and the standards they reach. These systems, although in their infancy, are beginning to have a positive

effect. Pupil-progress meetings now take place, where teachers account for the progress that their pupils are making. Intervention actions that are put in place are now more tailored to meeting the needs of individual pupils. School leaders have plans to develop these meetings further so that the progress of different groups of pupils at the school are tracked, for example most-able pupils and disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders work with phase leaders and individual teachers to help to solve any issues that are identified.

The arrival of the new headteacher has further strengthened the effectiveness of leadership and management. Not only are all leadership posts now filled, there is a real sense of 'moving forward' and there is a 'buzz' around school. Members of staff are up for the challenge of turning their school around.

There are now tangible improvements in evidence. The quality of teaching is stronger. The number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly. The roles of phase leaders are now more directly focused on areas of weakness at school. In addition, information about the school that is shared with governors is now more precise. For example, the recent headteacher's report to the governing body is a helpful document which has helped governors to challenge leaders as to the progress that they are making in developing provision.

School leaders are keen to develop their professional practice and have visited several schools, including those within the CAT. Leaders are open to new ideas but also think carefully about how this will work at John Curwen. They steer away from changing too much too quickly. This strategy has borne fruit. The quality of education is improving.

The new headteacher has a good handle on areas of provision that need further focus. Sharper 'rapid improvement plans' are currently being developed. Inspectors have identified the need to further develop the pupil premium strategy, and some of the documents and processes that are used to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A pupil premium strategy review is planned to take place once developments have started in earnest. Although improving, leaders and governors are under no illusion that there is still a way to go before the school can be judged to be good.

Nevertheless, the senior team and governors have raised expectations of how good they want their school to be. They are driving improvements. Development plans and quality assurance processes have improved. Leaders know what is working well and are helping to improve areas of weakness. Preparations for the school to become a member of the CAT in September 2019 are under way and sensible. The joint appointment of the headteacher is an example of this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching across the school has improved since the last monitoring visit; however, it remains too varied. Specifically, there are strengths in provision for

pupils in upper key stage 2 and in early years. Since the time of the last monitoring visit, the quality of provision in Year 2 has improved and likewise the quality of teaching in some Year 3 and Year 4 classes has strengthened.

In early years, many children make strong progress from their starting points. Inspectors saw sustained engagement on the part of the children. The early years environment is both welcoming and vibrant. Learning activities are purposeful and shaped so that they meet individual children's needs. For example, during the inspection some children were seen to produce some longer sentences which showed good progress in writing for these children. Early years is a relative strength of the school.

At key stage 1, pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive. Little time is wasted in these classrooms because pupils are familiar with routines and teachers' expectations. However, teachers' planning does not consistently meet the needs of all of these pupils and their progress is varied. At key stage 2, school leaders are aware that routines are not firmly embedded in Years 3 and 4. Here, behaviour can have a negative effect on learning because low-level disruption is too common. There is a variation in the quality of planning and the teaching of lessons in these classrooms. Provision in Years 5 and 6 is stronger, however. Pupils are making strong progress in these year groups, but some have considerable gaps in their knowledge that need to be addressed, as a result of weaker teaching in the past. Intervention programmes designed to help to fill these gaps are increasingly effective. Assessment information is helping school leaders to ensure that these programmes are targeted more precisely, both by way of the pupils involved, and also in the subject content that is covered.

Across the school, there is evidence that many of the most able pupils are not being challenged to reach the standards of which they are capable. Some lower-attaining pupils are not having their needs met. In addition, some of the documents designed to help teachers support pupils with SEND are not precise enough.

'Pupil-progress meetings' use information about how well pupils are doing to shape future teaching, and this is beginning to have a positive effect. Professional development has a high priority at the school for all staff. Recently, school leaders have trialled new assessment procedures in English and mathematics directly linked to teacher development programmes. In addition, teaching assistants continue to develop their skills. School leaders think deeply about the strengths of teaching assistants at the school and deploy them where they can have the greatest effect.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The pupils who spoke with inspectors gave tangible examples of the way in which behaviour has improved. Pupils talked animatedly about 'golden time' on Fridays, and how any misbehaviour results in some of this time being withheld from individuals. Pupils were crystal clear that this has had a positive effect on behaviour.

Similarly, changes to the structure of lunchtime, together with the activities that are available for pupils during that time, have helped to stop potential problems from arising. Pupils say that there is little bullying and that unkind words are not often used. They have confidence in members of staff to address any issues that they raise. Inspectors agree that standards of behaviour are improving.

Pupils with additional behavioural needs are supported in the rainbow room. Here, teachers and teaching assistants help individuals to focus on their work, while also following programmes to support their emotional or social needs. There is some evidence that when these pupils are reintegrated into mainstream classrooms their behaviour improves as a result of these intervention actions.

School leaders have improved pupils' attendance rates and decreased the number of pupils that are persistently absent. Staff at the school are tenacious in ensuring that pupils come to school. They give practical support and advice to parents when needed. Staff have been appropriately trained in issues relating to attendance, in addition to other safeguarding themes.

The curriculum ensures that pupils learn about different religions and family backgrounds. Religious education and assemblies focus on celebrating difference and fostering tolerance. Pupils told us about what they had learnt from Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott, for example. Inspectors also noted that pupils have learnt about creation from the perspective of different religions, as evidenced in their topic books. Leaders ensure that the curriculum fosters values such as acceptance, diversity and democracy.

Inspectors spoke to a number of parents at the beginning of the school day. They recognise the improvements that have taken place in as far as behaviour is concerned. Senior leaders have introduced strategies that have had a positive effect on the school's culture and the behaviour of pupils. Inspectors note, however, that the behaviour of some pupils, particularly in Years 3 and 4, needs to improve further.

Outcomes for pupils

Inspection evidence confirms that some classes are making stronger progress than at the time of the first monitoring visit. Specifically, pupils in classes in Year 2 and pupils in one of the classes in Years 3 and 4 are making stronger gains in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics. Inspection evidence also confirms that the information that is being used to track the progress that pupils are making across the school is more accurate now.

Although 'pupil-progress meetings' are a relatively recent development, their positive effect is being felt. The information that is being collected is supporting leaders in their deployment of teaching assistants, staffing of classes, and the timetabling of intervention programmes.

Nonetheless, further focus is required on providing the most able pupils at school with the levels of challenge that they need. In addition, there is a need to ensure that the pupil premium strategy is effective in supporting disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are aware that although rates of pupils' progress are increasing across the school, many pupils have substantial gaps in their knowledge that need to be addressed. Leaders' expectations have risen and there is an ambition to increase further the progress that pupils make and the standards that they reach.

External support

Since the time of the first monitoring visit until the appointment of the new headteacher, an executive trust leader from the CAT supported the school's leaders. This support and guidance was particularly welcomed by leaders when the assessment and tracking systems were being developed and rolled out. In addition, the CAT supported the school in checking safeguarding processes and procedures, making them more watertight.

After a handover period, the headteacher became responsible for ensuring that any external support was matched to the needs of the school. The executive trust leader ceased supporting the school formally at that point. At the time of this monitoring visit, support from some specialist leaders of education had been put into place.