

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



23 November 2015

Mr William Leyland  
Headteacher  
Kirkby High School  
Bracknell Avenue  
Kirkby  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L32 9PP

Dear Mr Leyland

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kirkby High School**

Following my visit to your school on 13 November 2015, 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 visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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 to become a good school. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that pupils are provided with opportunities to share their ideas and explain their understanding in more detail
- accelerate more rapidly the rates of progress made by pupils in mathematics
- tighten some aspects of the school development plan to ensure that success criteria are clear and measurable
- ensure that the school website contains all of the required statutory information.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, a group of four middle leaders, a group of 10 pupils from Year 9 and a group of three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and met with the Chief Executive Officer of the Rowan Learning Trust. You accompanied me on a tour of the school and we made short visits to a number of lessons. I evaluated the school development plan and looked at a range of documentation including information relating to achievement, attendance and exclusions, the monitoring of the quality of teaching, results from pupil surveys and the minutes of recent governing body meetings. I looked at a sample of work from pupils in Year 9.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, a significant staffing restructure has taken place. At the end of the summer term, eight members of non-teaching staff and four teachers left the school. Four teachers covering temporary vacancies joined the school in September and the school's single central record of checks relating to staffing has been amended accordingly.

## **Main findings**

Senior leaders and governors show a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve and demonstrate a strong drive to secure the improvements. The school development plan which was produced following the section 5 inspection addresses the areas for improvement which were identified. Greater sharpening is needed around some of the success criteria in the plan to ensure that the actions are fully measurable and use appropriate comparisons with national data.

GCSE examination results in 2015 showed an encouraging improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics and in the proportion making expected progress in English. The proportion making expected progress in mathematics, however, remained static. Evidence seen during the visit highlighted that the progress made by pupils in English continues to be stronger than in mathematics. More rapid acceleration of progress in this area is needed to bring the school performance in line with national figures. School leaders are aware of this issue and, with the support of the Trust, are working hard to address it. Changes to the curriculum and staffing allocation have taken place in mathematics but the impact of these measures is not yet clear.

There is a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and eight members of staff have been trained as leaders in the teaching and learning programme. Senior leaders report that the quality of teaching is improving as a result of the training

offered and that there is now a greater sharing of good practice between teachers. Teachers are focusing on developing written and verbal feedback, but currently to a lesser extent on pupils developing the skill of explaining their ideas in more detail. This remains an area for further development.

In order to support developments in literacy, staff in the school completed an audit of their own literacy confidence, and training is in place to enhance this. There is a greater understanding among staff of the shared responsibility for the development of pupils' literacy. This work will be further developed in the coming term as a whole-school approach to writing is launched.

Middle leaders are now more actively involved in monitoring the work of their departments through weekly 'temperature checks' which involve visits to lessons to look at a specific aspect. As a result, leaders report that there is greater consistency in the approach to learning in lessons across the school.

Behaviour in the school during the visit was calm and controlled. There was a fire alarm at the start of the day which was triggered by steam in the kitchen and pupils left the building in a very orderly manner. Pupils spoken to during the visit were keen to comment on the fact that they felt that behaviour in the school was improving and that the rules were now tighter. Regular reminders for staff about expectations are helping to reinforce the behaviour procedures. However, data seen in relation to fixed-term exclusions during the first half term of the current academic year show an increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions. An examination of the data indicates that there are a small number of pupils who are struggling to meet the higher expectations, but there are appropriate support pathways in place to support them.

A system of pupil leaders has been introduced to offer pupils peer support in aspects such as behaviour and attendance. Pupils spoken to commented positively on this system and also said that they appreciate that they are asked for their views on their school on a fortnightly basis.

School leaders have placed a very strong emphasis on improving attendance and have introduced inter-form challenges and rewards to recognise good or improving attendance. Detailed reports tracking and targeting the attendance of groups of pupils in the school are produced and shared with leaders and governors. The Trust has recognised this system as strong practice and the format of the report is now being used beyond the school. As a result of the focus, attendance data for the first half term of the academic year show an improvement when compared with the same period last year. Pupils spoke very positively about the new strategies in place to encourage attendance. They were clear about the rewards and consequences in place and said that they were finding the inter-form challenges motivating.

Governors spoken to during the visit showed a good understanding of the school. They commented on their regular involvement with school processes, and in

particular with the 'faculty health checks' which look at the performance of each curriculum area. As a result of their close working with the school leaders, governors are knowledgeable about the changes that have been put in place since the inspection and the difference that these changes are making. They are offering effective support and challenge to the leaders in the school.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school receives extensive and highly valued support from the Rowan Learning Trust and this is instrumental in bringing about and supporting improvements. The support has centred on a number of aspects which include improving the quality of teaching, the use of assessment data and tracking and the moderation of work across the Trust. The support is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching overall and in the reliability of the assessment of pupils' achievement and attainment.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Knowsley.

Yours sincerely

Julie Yarwood

**Her Majesty's Inspector**