

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mr Jonathan Mitchell  
The Co-operative Academy of Leeds  
Stoney Rock Lane  
Leeds  
West Yorkshire  
LS9 7HD

Dear Mr Mitchell

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Co-operative Academy of Leeds**

Following my visit to your school on 23 January 2018, 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 September 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in September 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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

The school should take further action to:

- improve pupils' attendance and decrease persistent absenteeism, particularly for pupils who are disadvantaged
- accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils, especially in mathematics and science, so that a higher proportion reach, and exceed, the expected standard for their age.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and governors. I also met with the education director from the trust and spoke with the interim chair of the governing body on the telephone to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's action plans were evaluated. I met with a group of pupils to discuss their learning and carried out joint observations in lessons with the vice-principal. A range of external reports were evaluated and I met with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo).

## **Context**

There have been two external appointments to the senior leadership team since September 2017. The chair of the governing body stepped down in July 2017 and an interim chair of the governing body is currently in place. A new leader of modern foreign languages has recently been appointed. The pupil population has increased since the previous inspection and approximately two thirds of pupils speak English as an additional language. Fifty-six first languages that are not or believed not to be English are currently spoken by pupils in the school.

## **Main findings**

Leaders, including governors, acknowledge that the pace of improvement following the previous inspection was slow initially. This is not the case now. You and your senior leaders work collaboratively. Leaders at all levels are aware of the areas for improvement and, quite literally, carry them around with them on the back of their identification badges. School improvement plans are detailed, clear and robustly monitored by a range of leaders, including governors. This systematic improvement planning has ensured that appropriate challenge is provided by leaders, and to leaders. Trustees provided intensive support and guidance following the previous inspection in aspects of the school's work, such as science, mathematics and provision for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, improvements can be seen in a wide range of the school's work. Over time, trustees have withdrawn their support and leaders, including governors, now provide more confident and effective leadership.

A significant amount of time and resources have been allocated to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The new 'Developing Outstanding Teaching Teams' initiative has enabled teachers to share effective teaching strategies within and across subject areas. Staff are extremely positive about the opportunities to plan together and conduct a range of observations in lessons to learn from the practice of others. Leaders and teachers from other trust schools have contributed to a bespoke professional development programme. The delivery of training has been closely linked to the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. For example, teachers have received support to improve their use of pupils' assessment information to plan lessons, challenge for the most able and new systems to assess pupils' learning. My inspection evidence endorsed leaders'

evaluations, which indicate that the quality of teaching in school has improved and is securing better progress from pupils. During the inspection, a group of most-able pupils told me that teachers provide appropriate levels of challenge and motivate them to do well. Leaders have introduced whole-school teaching policies to assist with teacher planning. For example, work scrutiny and observations in lessons underlined how the new 'bronze, silver and gold' policy is helping teachers to meet the varying needs of their pupils.

The SENCo has introduced new ways of assessing the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Assessments now provide teachers with information highlighting each pupil's strengths and what pupils need to improve. In addition to this information, the SENCo provides specialist advice and guidance to teachers to help them to understand the additional needs of the pupils they teach. As a result of this work, lessons are better planned to ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are appropriately challenged and supported in equal measure. Teaching assistants are given clear direction and performance targets. They work in close partnership with teachers before each lesson so that they know what is expected of them. Leaders now evaluate the impact of this support so that they know what is working and what needs to be changed. This meticulous approach is accelerating the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium took place in January 2017. Leaders acted swiftly to implement the recommendations of the review and subsequent external reviews were conducted to monitor progress. The action plan for pupil premium funding is now more focused on the key priorities and includes a range of appropriate targets. Leaders now use a wide evidence base, including the views of pupils, work in pupils' books and assessment information, to ensure that they have a full picture of the difference their actions are making. The disadvantaged pupils who attend alternative education are now supported well. They attend school more regularly because of the personalised curriculum they receive. Attainment is beginning to rise for disadvantaged pupils, including those in key stage 3. However, leaders are right to be concerned that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and science is not yet improving as quickly as it should, so that more pupils reach and exceed the expected standard for their age.

We discussed the attendance of pupils at length during the inspection. Pupils attend less often than pupils nationally and an increasing proportion of disadvantaged pupils are persistently absent. Some parents and carers do not support leaders' actions to improve the attendance of their children. Leaders are aware that weaker attendance is hampering the school's efforts to raise the achievement of some pupils' progress. Leaders have introduced innovative ways to reach out to those families who do not engage with the school. Recent attempts include sports clubs for parents and community dance events. Leaders are resolute in this respect and constantly research new ideas to encourage pupils to attend school. For example, an analysis of historic attendance patterns highlighted to leaders the specific days of

the year when pupils' attendance was below average. Consequently, leaders introduced a reward scheme that promoted attendance on those days. This has contributed to improving attendance overall. Pupils articulate the importance of good attendance. Attendance is beginning to improve. However, leaders recognise that there is more to do to ensure that absence and persistent absence, including for disadvantaged pupils, are at least in line with the national averages for all pupils.

### **External support**

Leaders are honest when appraising their own work and recognise where they need to seek external support. Leaders of science and mathematics have benefited from working closely with experienced colleagues from the trust to refine their self-evaluation and action plans. In addition to the assistance provided by the trust, you have looked further afield for specialist help and guidance. The pupil premium review enabled leaders to set a clear direction for improvement and has ensured that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is beginning to rise.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**