

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Tehmina Hashmi
Executive Principal
Bradford Academy
Teasdale Street
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD4 7QJ

Dear Ms Hashmi

Short inspection of Bradford Academy

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 2017 with Cathy Morgan and Wendy Bradford, Ofsted Inspectors, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your team are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and use your analysis of a wide range of information to take action to improve the provision and outcomes for pupils. The effect of these strategies can be clearly seen in the marked improvements in, for example, pupils' behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning. These have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Systems have been refined and staffing has been restructured to reflect the high expectations that leaders have of themselves, staff and pupils. Your plans, although detailed and successful in identifying the areas of the school that need further improvement, require further refinement to include how the impact of actions will be measured to inform next steps.

The school's previous inspection in January 2013 identified the need to ensure that teachers use information about pupils' skills and progress to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. You have addressed this aspect of your work effectively. In most areas of the curriculum across the school, staff use the detailed information that the school regularly gathers about pupils' previous learning to focus teaching so that pupils make good and better progress. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Guided by the senior team and the increasingly confident and strengthened subject leaders, staff prepare detailed and pupil-specific plans that

ensure good progress. Staff are generally skilled at setting pupils stimulating tasks that test their resilience and encourage autonomy. However, you are clear that more still needs to be done, especially in the primary area, to extend and challenge most-able pupils. Classroom routines and generally high expectations across the school encourage pupils to use their initiative and apply their skills.

There has recently been some turbulence in governance at the school. However, governors have acted promptly to address this. They have been effectively supported in their actions by officers of the Church of England Diocese of Leeds. The diocese and governors know the school well. They are clear about what needs to be done to continue to improve and consolidate the school's progress. A particular strength of governors is the increasingly effective links they have established with middle leaders in particular areas of the school. These links have enabled governors to gain useful insights into the school and helped to ensure that they are not relying solely on information from senior leaders about how well the school is doing.

Pupils feel safe at school. Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils are cordial and open. This means that there is an atmosphere of mutual respect and care in the school. This has a very positive impact on learning and pupils' progress. Pupils have noticed the significant improvements in behaviour at the school. They are also clear that these improvements are the result of measured, consistent and carefully planned actions by you and your staff, rooted in a zero tolerance of unkind behaviour and a positive emphasis on mutual respect and care. This attitude is very evident in the classrooms that inspectors visited. In these lessons, learning moved on swiftly because pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, felt at ease and knew that their views, honestly shared, would be taken seriously. Teachers encourage pupils to develop and deepen their learning, skills and understanding through deft, and often demanding, questioning. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, rise to this challenge.

Your work to develop pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness is a strength of the school. You have structured into the school day opportunities for all pupils to silently reflect and come together to talk about important issues such as democracy and their responsibilities to themselves and each other. Pupils told us that they appreciate this. Across the school inspectors saw many examples, both in class and around the site, of pupils taking careful account of others' needs and views.

You have worked effectively and diligently to improve attendance at the school. Historically, poor attendance has been an issue. As a result of your actions and those of your staff, supported effectively by governors and officers of the local authority, attendance is improving strongly, particularly in the primary area and sixth form, and is close to the national average. You have supported parents and carers in understanding the importance of regular attendance for pupils' safety, well-being and outcomes through targeted conversations and events at the school. You and your staff are tenacious in engaging with the parents of the small group of pupils whose attendance is still not yet good enough.

The sixth-form provision is effective and well led. Leaders ensure that the subjects, guidance and other experiences on offer to post-16 students focus on what these young adults need to be well prepared for their next steps in learning, training or employment. In the light of this, you and your sixth-form team have made changes to the balance of the sixth-form curriculum offer so that there is more emphasis on vocational opportunities. You are working effectively with partner providers to ensure that pupils who wish to pursue an academic programme of study have access to one in a local school or college. Sixth-form students are given many opportunities to take on responsibilities and further develop their independence. The shadow senior leadership team, made up of members of the sixth form, is fully involved in many aspects of the running of the school. Students recognise the importance of this and the other voluntary and charity opportunities that the school offers. The sixth-form learners with whom I spoke were fulsome in their praise of their teachers and the time and effort that staff put in to support, care for and challenge them.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have established a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. You, all of your staff and the governing body take your safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. You ensure that regular, effective training is provided for all staff and governors. As a result, they are up to date in their knowledge and understanding. You and your designated safeguarding leaders have forged strong and effective links with outside agencies. Your records of your dealings with these agencies are detailed and show your meticulous approach to this vital work. You engage with the local authority promptly and follow up safeguarding issues tenaciously.

The progress, well-being and safety of the comparatively small number of pupils who attend off-site learning are very carefully and regularly monitored.

You ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are meticulously kept and are of high quality.

Inspection findings

- Children settle well into the early years. This is because this aspect of the school's work is well led and staff are very effective in their engagement with parents. Parents welcome the school's open communications and the ways that staff work with them to make the children's move into school a calm and positive experience. Children who have SEN and/or disabilities are very well supported and make good progress from their starting points.
- Staff are well trained and regularly monitor children's progress to ensure that they are engaged in activities that develop their skills and help them grow in confidence. Staff provide many and varied opportunities for children to develop their speech through careful questioning and a range of interesting activities. Children are safe and happy and play well together.

- The learning environment across the school is attractive and inviting with many displays and celebrations of pupils' work. There are also helpful learning walls that underpin learning and give pupils ready access to information about the topic at hand. There are also displays that remind pupils of the world beyond Bradford and their place as citizens of it.
- Although improving as a result of effective action by leaders, attendance still needs to improve, especially in the secondary area of the school.
- The high priority given to reading across the school is a particular strength. Pupils read and discuss their reading regularly. All pupils across the school read at the start of the school day. There is a structured, school-wide approach to reading, which encourages a delight in reading through giving pupils opportunities to reflect on the impact of words and the ways in which writers use language to create particular effects and moods.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. You monitor the quality and impact of teaching very carefully to ensure that pupils make the progress that they should. You involve your middle and subject leaders in this. As a result, there is increasing clarity and precision in the follow-up work that you and other leaders undertake with members of staff to further improve the quality of their teaching. Staff value the training that they are given to improve their skills. Performance management is used well to address school and individual staff priorities.
- Governors, well supported by the diocese, are rapidly improving their ability and skills so that they can effectively challenge leaders to improve further the service offered by the school. The links with middle leaders that governors are developing are giving them increasingly keen insights into the workings of the school.
- There is some very high-quality teaching in the school. Inspectors saw many examples of staff engaging with pupils to extend their understanding and skills. Inspectors saw staff using questioning not only to check on pupils' understanding and knowledge but also to deepen their learning. Because relationships in the school are so cordial and positive, staff are able to be challenging and insistent in the way they question pupils. Pupils, supported by their peers, rise to the challenge.
- Disadvantaged pupils are increasingly making better progress. This is because staff know them well and are fully aware of and seek to address the barriers that may lie in the way of their learning and progress. Staff lesson plans contain additional detail about the ways that they will support and challenge disadvantaged pupils.
- The provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is effective and very well led. These pupils are well and tenaciously supported both in class and in smaller group settings. Their progress is carefully monitored and their parents are fully involved. Links with outside agencies and support beyond the school are strong. As a result, these pupils make generally good progress from their starting points.

- Leaders' planning of the provision offered by the school to learners in the sixth form is adapting well to the changing needs and aspirations of pupils at the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to focus relentlessly on improving pupils' attendance so that it is consistently at or above the national average
- governors continue to develop and deepen their skills so that they are able to hold leaders to account and thus ensure that the school continues to improve
- they further refine the post-16 provision so that it continues to meet learners' needs and aspirations.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Church of England Diocese of Leeds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and your senior leaders to discuss the school's effectiveness and what you have done to ensure that the school continues to improve. Inspectors also discussed the service that the school offers to children who have SEN and/or disabilities. I spoke on the telephone with a colleague who supports the school about their view of the school's progress and capacity to improve. I met with the director of education for the Church of England Diocese of Leeds. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also met with groups of middle leaders from the primary and secondary areas of the school.

An inspector attended an assembly.

I read a range of documents, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding systems, records and associated documents. I checked information about pupils' achievement along with evaluations of aspects of the school's work and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

In many cases accompanied by you or a member of your senior team, inspectors visited 41 classes to observe teaching, learning and assessment. We checked pupils'

progress in their books and folders. We talked formally with groups of pupils from Years 2, 8 and 13. We listened to pupils reading and discussed their reading with them. We also talked informally with pupils in lessons and around the school at lunch and breaktimes.

I considered the 53 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 36 free text comments from parents. I also took into account 75 responses to a staff questionnaire.