

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



21 February 2018

Tony Searle
Principal
Hans Price Academy
Marchfields Way
Weston-Super-Mare
Somerset
BS23 3QP

Dear Mr Searle

Short inspection of Hans Price Academy

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 2018 with Ofsted Inspector Malcolm Davison, 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

During your time in post, you have laid the foundations for improvements which have recently started to bear fruit. The school is increasingly the school of choice for local parents and carers because leaders have established a culture of learning and high aspiration. You and the wider leadership team are galvanising staff and driving a culture of improvement recognised by all. This culture is informed by 'Ready to Learn', an approach that has been implemented to improve pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour. It is proving to be highly successful. Pupils have embraced Ready to Learn because, as one pupil told me, 'it works', and helps them to concentrate on what matters – their learning. Pupils are not disturbed by low-level disruption and they want to participate in their lessons. They arrive promptly to lessons and are well equipped.

You are securing better-quality teaching in most subjects because middle leaders are becoming increasingly effective in their roles. They are enthusiastic and value the role they play in developing teachers' practice. Middle leaders feel trusted to lead improvement in their subject areas and to exercise their initiative. You are also holding them to greater account for pupils' progress. The enthusiasm felt by middle leaders is also felt by other staff across the school. Morale is high because staff want to work at the school.

Teaching is also improving because of the support provided by the wider Cabot

Learning Federation. For example, federation staff with specific subject expertise make regular visits to school to provide bespoke support for teachers. Staff also attend regular subject meetings with other teachers in the federation to enhance their subject knowledge. Consequently, staff have been able to address areas for improvement from the previous inspection that focused on teaching. For example, they have raised the level of challenge for pupils through more skilful questioning and provide different resources to support them in their work. However, the quality of teaching is not yet consistently strong across all subjects, for example science. Leaders are aware of specific weaknesses and are taking effective action to overcome them.

The academy council, which provides local governance, is increasingly providing a higher level of challenge to leaders. Recent minutes show that governors are becoming more adept at asking the most relevant, pertinent questions about pupils' achievement. They benefit from the strategic guidance provided by the federation board. This has helped to sharpen their practice. The academy council, in turn, is held to account in different ways. For example, the federation's scrutiny board monitors the extent to which governors are holding leaders to account.

Pupils feel positive about their school experience. Staff have nurtured a welcoming, tolerant school culture where pupils respect each other and feel it is 'OK to be different'. This is because good behaviour and the emphasis on learning enable pupils to feel safe and comfortable.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of leaders' actions to raise pupils' achievement in English and science. We also considered the suitability of the curriculum for all pupils. The third line of enquiry considered whether safeguarding is effective. Finally, we considered the extent to which teaching and behaviour were improving. These lines of enquiry are considered below where they have not already been referred to.

Safeguarding is effective.

Designated safeguarding staff organise and manage their responsibilities well. They ensure that effective lines of communication exist between staff and that all staff receive the necessary child protection training. The open, supportive school culture fosters positive relationships between staff and pupils. This means that pupils are willing to share with staff any concerns they might have. Staff are aware of the procedures for making referrals should they have concerns. These are stored in a comprehensive, easy-to-manage online system that enables designated staff to track developments for individual cases and take appropriate action. Where staff are required to liaise with external agencies, they ensure that appropriate support is forthcoming for the most complex cases. Staff indicate that, although the thresholds for some external agency involvement are high, this support makes a positive difference for the most vulnerable pupils. Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are well organised, comprehensive and up to date.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school for different reasons. These include site security, the supportive, tolerant nature of other pupils and the impact of Ready to Learn on establishing order and calm around the school. As one pupil told me, 'Behaviour is good because of the Ready to Learn system.' The vast majority of parents also agree that pupils are safe in school, as do all the staff who responded to the staff survey.

Inspection findings

- In 2017, pupils' progress in English was below average overall and for middle-ability pupils and disadvantaged pupils. Previously, overall progress in English had been in line with the national average. Pupils' progress in science has been below average overall and also for different groups of pupils over time.
- Leaders are clear about the need to raise pupils' achievement in certain subjects, such as English and science. They have analysed in detail the performance of previous groups of pupils in order to determine where extra support is required for current groups. For example, in English, the leader of this subject has analysed pupils' responses to different examination questions. This has enabled her to identify key weaknesses and alter teaching accordingly. Leaders are currently targeting middle-ability pupils to improve their performance.
- The school's own information about current progress in English and science indicates that pupils of different abilities are making better progress this year than previously. This is also the case for disadvantaged pupils, who make up nearly half of the school population. Leaders are confident that pupils' progress and attainment will be comparable with national averages in 2018. Analysis of November mock examination information shows that current Year 11 pupils performed much better than their peers did in last year's mock examinations. Progress information is moderated and checked for accuracy. This process is made more robust because it is conducted at a federation-wide level and involves all the secondary schools in the trust.
- The quality of work in pupils' books is variable across subjects. In mathematics, for example, where progress is strong, pupils are given many opportunities to develop their reasoning, calculation and problem-solving skills. They grapple with difficult concepts, and pupils' engagement and persistence are tangible. In English, pupils are set work that enables them to investigate texts at a deep level. In these subjects, disadvantaged pupils take as much pride in their work as their peers. Work is well presented and pupils commit to doing their best. However, in science, the quality of pupils' work is inconsistent. Some pupils' work is underdeveloped because tasks are not challenging enough. Correspondingly, pupils lack engagement and, in some cases, do not act on the feedback they receive from teachers.
- The recruitment of staff has been difficult in science, which has hindered progress. However, a number of new staff have recently been appointed who are new to teaching. They are being effectively supported by school and federation staff but, considering low achievement over time, the inexperience of staff heightens potential vulnerability in this subject.

- Pupils generally enjoy their experience of school and show positive attitudes to learning in lessons. Most pupils are self-assured enough to speak up in class and offer their views. They enjoy participating in class discussions. Teachers' questioning is informed by good subject knowledge and confident understanding of their pupils. This helps to promote participation.
- The curriculum meets the needs of different pupils. It does not remain static. Leaders adapt the curriculum to ensure that it is fit for purpose. For example, a second language has been introduced to promote modern foreign languages. This has had a very positive effect, as many more pupils than anticipated are now following language courses. Pupils are also encouraged to follow additional courses during extra-curricular time. These contribute to their sense of achievement and add another 'string to their bow' without having a negative impact on other courses. Different curriculum pathways are open to pupils and these are well received by the local community, such as further education providers.
- The implementation of Ready to Learn has improved attendance dramatically. In 2016, both absence and persistent absence were well above the national average. In 2017, however, absence dropped to below average for both measures. Exclusions have also fallen significantly in the current academic year, now that pupils 'know where they stand' with the new system.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils across the school make the progress they are capable of in science.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors spoke to senior leaders, middle leaders, representatives of the academy council, representatives of the Cabot Learning Federation and pupils.

Inspectors jointly visited lessons with senior staff to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. We also scrutinised the work in pupils' books.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation. Inspectors considered academy council and federation minutes. We also considered information relating to pupils' progress, exclusion and support for teaching and learning. Additionally, we scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children.

Inspectors took account of 28 responses to the Parent View online survey. In addition, I took account of 42 responses to the staff survey and 40 responses to the pupil survey issued during the inspection.