

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



21 February 2018

Mrs Shirley Watson
Principal
Dixons City Academy
Ripley Street
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD5 7RR

Dear Mrs Watson

Short inspection of Dixons City Academy

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018 with Wendy Bradford, Ofsted Inspector, and Stephen Rogers, Ofsted Inspector, 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 your school was judged to be good in May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You have created a culture of high aspirations while providing a safe and friendly environment in which pupils can thrive. You are rightly proud of your pupils' achievements and you have inspired your staff to communicate the highest expectations. Parents and carers and pupils value the quality of support provided by teachers so that pupils can achieve their very best. As a result, the school has continued to improve since the last inspection.

You are unwavering in your commitment to enriching pupils' lives and broadening their cultural experiences. You provide a broad and demanding curriculum which inspires pupils to aim for very challenging targets. Pupils participate very well in lessons, engage readily in debates and show respect for others' opinions. They demonstrate great pride in the presentation and quality of their work.

Leaders and governors are highly ambitious and believe that there is no room for complacency. Leaders undertake a thorough analysis of the school's strengths and have been successful in addressing the areas for improvement from the last

inspection. For example, pupils now experience high-quality teaching across the curriculum. Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well and activities are well matched to pupils' needs and starting points. Additional funding is used judiciously to enable vulnerable pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Governors are very experienced and provide effective challenge to leaders.

Leaders have been successful in ensuring that pupils make substantial and sustained progress. In 2017, pupils leaving Year 11 made above-average progress across a wide range of subjects. Their attainment in English and mathematics was above average. Disadvantaged pupils also made progress which was above other pupils nationally. Girls, in particular, made very strong progress from their starting points. Current pupils in the school are also making very strong progress across the curriculum, both at key stage 3 and key stage 4, with a marked improvement in pupils' progress and attainment in English since 2016.

The school's systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are rigorous and lead to rapid improvement. A particularly strong feature of the school's practice is the way in which pupils in all year groups are fully engaged in tracking their own progress in every subject. Pupils are highly motivated because they reflect regularly on their strengths and they understand their next steps.

Another strong feature of the school's practice is the way in which teachers focus consistently on improving pupils' literacy skills. Teachers challenge pupils to develop their vocabulary systematically, to read widely and to structure their writing effectively. As a result, pupils are confident to express and develop their ideas, both orally and in writing.

Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They benefit from highly effective professional development. Opportunities to work with others, across the trust schools, ensure that newly appointed teachers and leaders develop their expertise effectively. Staff morale is high, and staff value the quality of support and challenge they receive from senior leaders and governors.

Leaders are aware that pupils need to make faster progress in modern foreign languages, especially the most able pupils in key stage 3. The subject leaders have reviewed the programmes of study to make sure that they are more challenging. Pupils' writing skills are improving in languages at key stage 4. Leaders are also addressing the needs of learners in the sixth form so that they are now making good progress on academic programmes, including in the science subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Regular training sessions and briefings ensure that teachers, and governors, understand their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe. Pupils who met inspectors formally and informally said that they feel safe and know how to report concerns. They talked

enthusiastically about discussions they have had in school on how to keep safe when using social media and how to protect themselves from radicalisation.

The recently appointed safeguarding leader provides strong leadership. She has increased the capacity of the pastoral team to support pupils further and brought in additional systems for reporting and tracking concerns. Referrals are followed up robustly. She works closely with the most vulnerable pupils in the school and shows a strong understanding of the barriers to learning which they face. She engages a range of external agencies to make sure that pupils receive the support that is needed.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we explored how effectively leaders are sustaining the improvements in pupils' progress. It was clear that you are uncompromising in your ambition to ensure that pupils make outstanding progress in all subjects. You and your leaders are highly skilled in tackling areas for improvement. Therefore, action plans are well considered and monitored rigorously. For example, leaders took decisive action to improve pupils' progress in English. High-quality teaching and effective assessment of pupils' progress led to rapid improvement in 2017. Current pupils in all year groups are also making very strong progress in English because teachers plan challenging activities to meet pupils' needs. Pupils show very positive attitudes to their learning in English and work in pupils' books shows how well they are developing their skills in reading and writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils also continue to make very good progress across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Leaders use additional funding skilfully to provide additional intervention for individual pupils who are falling behind. Funding is also used to enable pupils to take part in enrichment activities, residential visits and attend university open days.
- Leaders have had some success in improving pupils' progress in languages at key stage 4. However, you agree that the most able pupils in key stage 3 are not always given work which is suitably challenging in these subjects. You now provide effective support and training for inexperienced teachers.
- We also discussed the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. In 2016, you appointed an experienced SEN coordinator who has reviewed the provision for pupils with a range of complex needs. She has provided detailed and useful advice for teachers to use in the classroom to support pupils. There is clear evidence that this support is helping these pupils to make faster progress. You have also been successful in improving the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities by working closely with families, by improving pupils' behaviour and reducing fixed-term exclusions for this group of pupils.
- The final area of focus for the inspection was the progress of students studying academic courses in the sixth form. This was because, in 2016 and 2017, students' progress on A level courses was noticeably lower than in vocational courses. Approximately 40% of students join the school in the sixth form from

other local schools. The head of sixth form has accurately identified the need for teachers and leaders to prepare students more effectively for the transition to a new school. She has raised the students' expectations in relation to attendance, progress and independent study. She also has a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths in teaching across subjects and monitors students' progress closely. There are early signs that the current Year 12 students have settled in well. However, you agree that there is further work to do to ensure that all students make strong progress at A level, including in the science subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers accelerate pupils' progress in modern foreign languages by planning challenging activities for the most able pupils in key stage 3
- they continue to address the variations in learners' outcomes in the sixth form, particularly in A level science subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Lynn Kenworthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your leadership team and middle leaders. I also met with the chief executive officer of the trust and with three members of the governing body. We met with pupils in Year 7 to Year 11, formally in groups and informally in lessons, to discuss their views about school life. We visited learning across a range of subjects and year groups, some with yourself. Inspectors also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work in books. We looked at a range of school information, including current assessment information, leaders' school self-evaluation and information about the behaviour and attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Inspectors considered the 57 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and the 55 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. We also took account of the 55 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the 40 written comments by parents and the two phone calls from parents.