

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 September 2021

Will Thompson
The Brittons Academy
Ford Lane
Rainham
Essex
RM13 7BB

Dear Mr Thompson

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of The Brittons Academy

Following my visit with Alice Clay, Phil Garnham, Brian Oppenheim and David Radomsky, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), to your school on 29 and 30 June 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in July 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Empower Learning Academy Trust (ELAT), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Havering. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Sophie Welch
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 29 and 30 June 2021

Context

Ten new senior and middle leaders have been appointed since the last section 5 inspection. An interim trust board (ITB) was introduced prior to the previous section 5 inspection. A new chair was appointed in September 2019. The trust plans to return to a governing body from September 2021.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

The work of leaders and those responsible for governance shows strong capacity for further improvement. They have kept a clear focus on the provision of education for pupils. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, leaders have made progress towards addressing the areas for improvement from the section 5 inspection.

Leaders have made some significant changes to the curriculum offer and how it is delivered. For example, the frequency of computer science lessons has increased, and pupils now have access to a triple science qualification. Leaders also plan to increase the amount of time allocated to personal, social, health and economic education to enable deeper coverage of subject content from Year 7 upwards.

The full range of national curriculum subjects is now offered in key stage 3. Leaders have checked with primary schools to make sure that work from key stage 2 is not repeated in Year 7. Senior leaders have introduced a common approach to classroom teaching routines. However, the work planned across all of key stage 3 does not consistently make clear the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. For example, in design and technology, the focus is on skills, but sometimes this is not linked to developing deeper subject knowledge. A case in point was in Year 8, where pupils were chiselling across the grain but could not explain why they needed to work from the middle of the wood. Not all subject leaders have planned and sequenced specific knowledge carefully so that pupils know and remember more.

A further priority for senior leaders is to ensure that the content taught in all subject areas is at least as ambitious as that set out in the national curriculum. This is particularly the case in music. All pupils in key stage 3 now have timetabled lessons, but much less time is given to music than to other foundation subjects. In turn, this means that the experiences and genres taught are narrowed.

The situation in music is not helped by the fact that there is not a subject leader in post. This is also the case in physical education. A significant number of leaders in other subjects are new to their roles. The trust has provided valued support and training for subject leaders through curriculum networks, such as the mathematics hub. They have used these networks to moderate work and improve their confidence with assessments. Nevertheless, curriculum planning remains extremely

variable. It ranges from well sequenced – for example in mathematics and English – to poorly sequenced, for instance in languages. Not all departments have benefited from further subject-specific training.

COVID-19 restrictions have affected pupils' access to extra-curricular opportunities. Clubs are gradually being reintroduced. For example, a music club is running at lunchtime. Pupils are proud of the awards they have won for artwork and public speaking. Leaders have recently relaunched 'PRIDE', a scheme to recognise pupils' achievements. Pupils are commended for displaying selected characteristics: being positive, respectful, independent, determined and excellent. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about this initiative. They were also very positive about the careers advice and guidance they have received. Older pupils could speak confidently about their plans and next steps for college and apprenticeships. Pupils appreciate the support they receive from their teachers.

A clear plan for literacy has raised the profile of reading. Whole-school events, such as World Book Day celebrations, help to encourage a love of reading. Pupils receive PRIDE points when they read, and win certificates and badges as rewards. Extra help with reading is provided for pupils who need it, including work with phonics. While leaders can begin to see the impact of this work, they have rightly identified reading and literacy as continuing priorities for the school.

Leaders have taken effective action to improve behaviour. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils appreciate the provision of strong pastoral support. Staff spend time developing positive working relationships with pupils and show concern for their mental health and well-being. Disadvantaged pupils are prioritised in leaders' strategic planning. These pupils are currently receiving additional mentoring and tutoring as part of the COVID-19 catch-up plan.

Leaders, supported by the ITB, have been swift to challenge staff underperformance where required. Clear systems are in place to support subject leaders with monitoring in their departments. Board members challenge leaders on what they report.

Leaders have a clear vision for school improvement. Staff understand these priorities. Pupils and teachers speak highly about the changes in the school and their day-to-day experiences. Leaders give careful consideration to staff workload and well-being. Teachers are very positive about the support they receive.

Additional support

Leaders have benefited from the support provided by the Empower Learning Academy Trust (ELAT). The senior leadership team has been increased, further helping to bring about capacity for improvement. Working with the ELAT academy effectiveness adviser has also helped leaders to collaborate effectively.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They also met the multi-academy trust chief executive officer, pupils, representatives of those responsible for governance, the chair of the trust and the ELAT academy effectiveness adviser.