

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



3 May 2017

Tim Clark
Principal
Skinners' Academy
Woodberry Grove
London
N4 1SY

Dear Mr Clark

Short inspection of Skinners' Academy

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Rhona Povey, 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.

They have successfully addressed the areas identified for improvement and transformed the culture of the school. Governors and the school's sponsor have been effective in supporting the changes and working towards the school's vision of helping pupils 'be the best you can be'. You joined the school as principal shortly after the last inspection and quickly identified that standards of behaviour had fallen, becoming a barrier to learning. You promptly introduced robust procedures that have raised standards and expectations, with the full support of governors, staff and the vast majority of parents. Leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is accurately informed by sharper practice, including monitoring teachers' work and pupils' progress. Middle leaders are effective in supporting plans for development to drive further improvements.

The 2016 GCSE results demonstrate the progress that the school has made in improving pupils' attainment. Overall, pupils made significantly better progress than average and no group of pupils underperformed in any subject area. Pupils attained higher standards than other secondary schools last year. In English, the gains were particularly marked, following effective additional interventions and good support to the department. Your engagement with the Hackney Learning Trust and schools within the Skinners' Company Foundation is supporting your staff's ongoing development, as well as sharing practice with others.

You have rightly identified that disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made less progress than their peers last year. The school's assessment system has been revised and provides greater clarity on the progress that pupils and groups make towards aspirational targets. As a result, teachers plan lessons that take account of pupils' needs and aim to stretch all abilities, including the most able pupils. A broad range of additional booster sessions are in place to support those at risk of falling behind. A variety of enrichment activities have improved pupils' attitudes to school, further promoting their success. Remaining differences are diminishing between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and their peers.

The sixth form has been a significant focus of leaders' work since it reopened in September 2015. Students mostly follow A-level study programmes, with some studying an equivalent vocational business studies course. The entry requirements for the sixth form are high, reflecting leaders' aspirations for students' outcomes. Students follow suitable courses and the vast majority of Year 13 students already have university offers, with some pursuing ambitious vocational routes. Leaders' and governors' evaluation of the sixth form accurately identify that further work needs to be undertaken. This includes, as the sixth form grows, offering a greater variety of courses, both academic and vocational, suited to students' prior attainment and interests.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school, based upon robust checking and monitoring procedures, alongside effective training. This enables staff, governors and pupils to spot potential risks and work effectively to manage them. The attitude of 'nothing is too small' exemplifies the approach that the school takes to ensure that pupils' welfare remains a priority. Local risks are well understood by staff and pupils, including gangs, child sexual exploitation and issues relating to the 'Prevent' duty. The designated safeguarding leader has made sure that procedures for responding to any issues are robust. Governors' oversight of safeguarding is effective. Records relating to safeguarding are accurate and of high quality, including pre-employment checks made on staff. Leaders are sensitive to pupils' individual contexts and have adjusted the school's behaviour strategies to take them into account. External agencies are engaged when appropriate, while strong relationships with the local authority and police liaison officer reinforce the school's ability to support pupils' well-being.

Inspection findings

- At the start of this inspection, inspectors and senior leaders agreed to focus upon three key lines of enquiry. The first of these explored how leaders are supporting the performance of the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Since the last inspection, significant focus has been placed upon improving the level of challenge that teachers routinely provide for the most able. Inspection evidence indicates that

the most able are suitably stretched through well-pitched activities, including the more able within lower-ability sets.

- The assessment system now provides teachers with useful and accessible information about pupils' needs and prior attainment. Most use this effectively, particularly in supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional help and activities are organised to support disadvantaged pupils well. However, both groups of pupils tend to make slower progress than their peers. Current plans to improve their progress in lessons are diminishing the differences between their performance and the performance of their peers.
- The pastoral support that all pupils receive is strong and enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The breakfast club is free and open to all pupils. Year 7 pupils also receive additional music tuition as part of their timetable. A significant amount of work goes into effectively supporting pupils' personal development, including their understanding of potential career routes. These examples demonstrate an aspect of leaders' determination to develop a culture where pupils enjoy coming to school and feel part of the community, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The next line of enquiry focused upon how effectively staff manage pupils' behaviour. This is because fixed-term exclusions have been high since the last inspection, but with very few permanent exclusions and good attendance during that time. Expectations for pupils' behaviour have been raised significantly. Staff and pupils who spoke to inspectors or responded to Ofsted's surveys all reflected the 'big changes' made so that pupils' behaviour is at least consistently good. Pupils told inspectors that they feel happy and safe here. Older pupils who have witnessed the changes told inspectors about the significant difference made since your arrival as principal. This includes a zero-tolerance approach to infringements of the school's rules, greater consistency in how staff manage behaviour and improving pupils' attitudes to learning.
- The 'BASE', an on-site alternative to exclusion, is an effective part of the school's behaviour management system. Pupils receive bespoke support to improve their behaviour and there is a clear focus on supporting those pupils back into the main school. Pupils value other strategies, including the 'Impact zone', which links good behaviour with access to enrichment activities. Fixed-term exclusions currently remain high overall. However, the strategies introduced have worked to dramatically improve behaviour over time, reflected in the far lower number of repeat exclusions.
- Leaders intend further work to ensure that pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour. The school continues to engage with pupils and parents in order to build upon the improvements and successes so far.
- Finally, we focused on how students are being supported through their 16 to 19 study programmes. Observations of learning highlighted the broader strengths in teaching, learning and assessment across the school. Teachers use questioning skilfully and have high expectations of what students can achieve. Students receive highly effective careers advice and guidance and a wide range of enrichment opportunities that they use to good effect.

- Pupils reported to inspectors that they feel well supported in all aspects of their development at this school – a view inspectors agree with based upon the evidence gathered. The vast majority of pupils progressed from Year 12 into Year 13 last year and all students currently hold offers to ambitious destinations at the end of the year.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for students. Aligned to the school's enterprise focus, they have ensured that students receive good teaching and learning, alongside effective personal development activities. Sixth-form leaders continue to refine their skills through effective professional development and have plans in place to develop the sixth form further. This includes broadening the range of subjects offered beyond the A-level and vocational courses currently on offer, such as GCSE equivalent and technical stepping stone courses.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- diminish further the difference between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and their peers
- refine and embed the strategies to further improve the 16 to 19 study programmes.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Tiplin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons with senior leaders to observe learning and scrutinise pupils' work. This included observations of the nurture groups and activities in the school's on-site exclusion unit, the BASE.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, staff, governors and the school's local authority improvement partner. Inspectors also met with and held informal conversations with pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and staff who communicated with the inspectors, including via Ofsted's surveys and the school's parent surveys.
- Inspectors observed pupils during social times and lesson changeovers.

- Inspectors scrutinised documentation including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and plans for development, assessment information, procedures, records and logs relating to behaviour and records and procedures relating to safeguarding, including the single central record of pre-employment checks made on staff.