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Tash Moriarty
Principal
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Dear Ms Moriarty

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Harefield Academy

Following my visit to your school on 12 May 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the culture of high expectations is sustained to enable pupils from different groups to achieve the ambitious targets set
- ensure that the review of the governing body takes place as planned
- leave no stone unturned to ensure that persistent absentees attend regularly to achieve a good level of education and enable the school to achieve the above average attendance target.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, two newly qualified teachers, a group of pupils and the chair of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met the chief education officer of the multi-academy trust that the school plans to join. The school's post-Ofsted improvement plan was evaluated. I made short visits to six lessons and the deputy vice-principal accompanied me on each visit.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, you have restructured the senior leadership team and made changes to roles among the entire teaching staff. The high proportion of supply staff employed during the previous academic year no longer work at the school. Staffing is now stable and the school does not rely on agencies to provide cover teachers. You have used safeguarding training very well to make staff more vigilant about pupils' safety. This increased awareness contributed to you taking swift action to ensure that pupils' welfare is given the highest priority. In technology, you reviewed and addressed health and safety concerns and the curriculum provided. A new director of learning for mathematics was appointed in June 2016. Two middle leaders, one newly appointed, now share the responsibility for leading English.

Main findings

Leaders at all levels, including those in the proposed academy trust, readily accepted the outcome of the section 5 inspection. All recognised that the first six months of your appointment were a defining period in the school's improvement. You took immediate action to begin rectifying the much-delayed work on improving the school. The post-Ofsted development plan covers one year of intense work and includes clear targets, time frames, actions for improvement and specific criteria to evaluate what has been achieved. The plan includes key priorities, and it is fit for purpose. The plans for English and mathematics promote rapid improvement.

My visits to classrooms, and discussions with pupils and staff, took into consideration the changes made to improve the quality of teaching, and pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. Improvements are tangible, and the school has been transformed. I saw that both staff and pupils have high expectations of work and behaviour. Previously, expectations were too low, and there is now a culture of learning. Pupils are extremely positive about the changes made and say that their 'teachers are now up to standard; there are more consistent lesson plans and they plan ahead.' Pupils' comments confirm that the emphasis on training and development to improve teaching has had a direct impact on their learning. Pupils are making better progress. Regular tracking and use of assessment information suggest that a higher proportion of pupils are on target to achieve good GCSE grades in English and mathematics. The school's predictions for

the 2017 examinations indicate improvement on 2016, but, as we agreed, the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is still not good enough. Behaviour has improved and pupils acknowledged that the new behaviour policy has made a difference to them regulating their own behaviour.

These changes have been possible because teachers are accountable for pupils' progress and line managers are fully involved in the process of monitoring work. Furthermore, priorities for improvement are linked to staff appraisal and staff accept the new ethos and vision for the school, which they say are transparent. New staff are satisfied with the support provided to refine their skills.

Actions taken to improve attendance have led to a small rise. In some instances, sensitive support and legal actions have resulted in more pupils attending school regularly. Nevertheless, you recognise that there is still more to do to meet the above average attendance target.

You have fully addressed the minimum standards for boarding by introducing robust systems for monitoring and maintaining records. Equally, the new procedures in relation to boarders going missing have been implemented. You found that the new systems were suitable when they were tried and tested.

The governing body is in a stronger position than previously. Records of minutes show that they are providing more challenge through delving into pupils' performance and the school's effectiveness. They have audited their skills and the review of governance is due to be carried out this term.

External support

The low results in 2016 led to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) recommending that the school join a multi-academy trust. You have worked closely with the governing body, the EFA and the Department for Education to identify and accept the Meller Education Trust as the preferred choice. The school has engaged well with the specialist support advisers for English and mathematics and a financial adviser. The directors of learning say they have benefited from the support and advice offered. The school and the trust are working with the EFA to ensure that the past budget deficit is managed and repaid gradually.

Directors of learning are working very closely with neighbouring local authorities, namely Hillingdon and Harrow, to share and develop good practice in relation to moderation. This has reassured staff that their assessments are accurate.

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

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney
Her Majesty's Inspector