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Mr S Curran
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Curran

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Tong High School

Following my visit to your school on 12 January 2016, with Philip Riozzi, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 which 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 April 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and representatives of the local authority and Bradford Partnership. Visits were made to lessons to review teaching and pupils' work. A range of school documentation including pupils' performance information and attendance and behaviour records were reviewed. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, which judged the school to have serious weaknesses, the school has entered into a partnership with the Tauheedul Education Trust and an application has been submitted for Tong High School to become an academy. Three

teachers left at the end of the summer term and 11 teachers joined the school in September 2015. A leader of mathematics is currently absent and a deputy headteacher is temporarily undertaking her duties.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

School leaders have been slow to take action to tackle the areas for improvement and secure progress in pupils' achievement. Although their response has quickened in the latter half of the autumn term, constant revisions of plans have led to increasing complexity. Current plans do not sharply prioritise what needs to be done to drive the school forward, and have few clear targets to indicate intended outcomes in the short and longer term. Governors demonstrate a strong moral imperative to raise achievement and close the gaps that exist throughout the school in the progress of specific groups of pupils. Governors note a lack of clarity and depth to school plans but have not challenged these weaknesses sufficiently. Their role in rigorously checking the impact of the school's work and holding leaders to account for their actions to improve the school is not fully demonstrated. An external review of governance is recommended in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Unexpectedly low results in the summer 2015 examinations in English and mathematics caused leaders to reassess the methods used within school to evaluate pupils' achievement. Teachers and middle leaders are beginning to draw upon a broader range of evidence in an effort to secure accurate assessment throughout the school. More frequent testing and checks on the skills pupils demonstrate in lessons and in their books are taking place. However, assessment is not yet robust. The school's latest information shows considerable variance in the progress made by different groups of pupils in different subjects, particularly at Key Stage 3.

Although there are pockets of stronger practice, a lack of consistency in teaching is leading to slower progress for pupils. The school is beginning to identify, with the support of the local authority, where teaching needs to improve. Senior and middle leaders are evaluating the quality of teaching with growing confidence and accuracy.

Staff welcome accountability and the recent focus on sharing strong practice in their subjects. Some teachers are planning English and mathematics lessons more precisely to develop pupils' skills and understanding of concepts. Some pupils are responding to increasing guidance and feedback about their work.

The support of Bradford Partnership has usefully assisted the sixth form leader in developing a clear and strategic approach to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Sensible strategies in English and mathematics are emerging to support sixth form learners more effectively in developing and deepening their learning. However, the impact of this recent work has yet to be demonstrated in results.

The school has introduced a non-negotiable approach to behaviour. A small but significant number of pupils, almost 10% of the school, are refusing to comply. Consequently, school records show a continuing issue with low-level disruption in classrooms and increased use of 'call outs' for pupils who refuse to follow instructions.

Despite the continuing trend of high absence rates, there is evidence of the impact of specific initiatives on small numbers of pupils.

Parent View, Ofsted's online survey of parents, has had further responses since the inspection in April 2015. The feedback shows that some parents have a particularly negative view about the leadership and management of the school and how their concerns are responded to. The headteacher's recent consultation with parents about the plans for the academy is a positive step towards explaining and involving parents more fully in the actions being taken to improve their children's education.

The local authority has revised the statement of action to ensure that actions address the areas for improvement more fully. The structured support it has commissioned from Bradford Partnership, local leaders of education and good schools has helped to plug gaps and assist the school in moving forward during the autumn term. The local authority recognises the need to quicken the pace of improvement and is working purposefully with partners, including the Tauheedul Education Trust, to support the school during its transition to becoming an academy.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bradford local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector