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Dear Elizabeth Parry

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Da Vinci Community School

Following my visit to your school on 16 March 2016, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2014. 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- increase the level of challenge in lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3, so that pupils, especially the most able, make accelerated progress
- provide more opportunities for subject leaders to share good practice so that leadership is strengthened even further and all pupils consistently benefit from teaching that is good or better.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, middle leaders and members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the

last inspection. The school's development plan was evaluated as well as other documents relating to school improvement including the school's self-evaluation. We also visited a number of lessons jointly.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit you have been newly appointed. Four new members joined the governing body, replacing resignations. There is now a new head of science and a temporary head of mathematics. The deputy headteacher in charge of teaching and learning took up her post in September.

Main findings

You have already made a significant impact on the direction and clarity of vision across the school. Your clear approach to leadership has helped to ensure that leaders at all levels understand their roles and how they will be held to account. You are supported well by staff. The school's self-evaluation has resulted from a thorough diagnostic review of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The development plan that supports the school's evaluation is now much more clearly focused on improvement than last year. The success criteria at each key point in the process are clear and measurable, greatly helping governors to track and monitor the progress of the school.

Leaders have made important recruitment decisions which are strengthening subject and middle leadership. Actions to tackle underachievement in mathematics, an area for improvement at the last inspection, are making a difference. The new temporary head of mathematics has a very sharp understanding of the previous weaknesses in the subject and is implementing a clear plan of action, which is already having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. Reliable school predictions suggest that the proportion of pupils making expected progress in mathematics is set to improve considerably this year. Leaders of key subjects are becoming much more skilled in interpreting pupils' assessment information and using this data to drive improvements.

The leadership of teaching is strengthening. Teachers now benefit from regular feedback to improve their classroom practice. As a result, there is greater consistency in the quality of feedback teachers give to pupils. Teachers are using information about pupils' progress and additional needs to focus their lesson planning more effectively than previously. The programme of continuous professional development is now well thought-out and scheduled. While leaders have recognised the need to increase levels of challenge for pupils across the school, some teachers still do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can and should be able to do, especially at Key Stage 3; some pupils' targets, particularly for the most able, are still too low.

Leaders use the outcomes of quality assurance activities to provide personalised

coaching and support for teachers. Subject leaders have also benefited from support from specific leadership training courses and advice and guidance from senior leaders in education. However, opportunities to share good practice between subject leaders especially for those new to post, is limited. Senior and subject leaders recognise that this would help to strengthen leadership, accelerate improvements and drive consistency in teaching across the school.

Pupils continue to display high levels of engagement and positive attitudes in lessons. The pastoral team have worked hard to reduce exclusions successfully; absence rates, including persistent absence, have reduced and are now close to national averages.

Governance has been strengthened by the appointment of new and knowledgeable members since September. Governors have acted upon the recommendations at the last monitoring visit. They have helped to shape the school development plan and their role in the plan is much clearer. Increased visits to the school, such as meetings with the junior leadership team, have helped governors to gain the views of pupils. As a result, they have been able to validate the information given to them by the school leaders about behaviour and teaching. Governors have stepped up their level of challenge of school leaders since the last monitoring visit. They are ambitious and committed to improving standards.

External support

The school continues to benefit from external support from a teaching school alliance, which has provided advice and guidance to the science, English, mathematics and humanities departments. This support has greatly helped to standardise pupils' assessment information. You have been supported well by a school improvement advisor. The local authority continues to support leaders; their joint observations of teaching with members of the senior leadership team have helped to validate leaders' self-evaluation.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Derby City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector