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Mr David Priestley
Headteacher
Greenfield Community College, A Specialist Arts and Science School
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Dear Mr Priestley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Greenfield Community College, A Specialist Arts and Science School

Following my visit to your school on 27 November 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 May 2017. 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 for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that checks on the quality of teaching across both sites, including by senior and middle leaders, continue to be carried out with sufficient rigour so that inconsistencies in teaching are ironed out swiftly so that teaching and pupils' outcomes improve at a faster rate.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, a group of middle leaders and members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I also met with a representative from the local authority, a group of Year 7 pupils and a group of pupils from Years 10 and 11. The school improvement plan and other documents were evaluated, including various documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and teaching and learning. I visited lessons, with two senior leaders, in order to observe teaching and learning, to speak to pupils and to sample some of their books. I also spent time with two senior leaders, scrutinising a sample of pupils' books from different year groups and ability ranges and from both sites.

Context

Since the previous inspection in May 2017, three senior leaders have left the school and there is currently an interim leadership team in place. This includes one senior leader seconded from the local authority to add further capacity and to focus on improving the quality of teaching. There is a new vice-chair of the governing body and two newly elected parent governors.

Main findings

Leaders and governors are reflective, and they are determined to tackle the identified areas from the previous inspection report. Leaders' roles and responsibilities are now clear and, because of this, decisive action is being taken to improve the quality of teaching across both sites. The plans for school improvement are realistic and aspirational, supported by clear lines of accountability and timescales for meeting specific improvement areas. Governors and senior leaders' expectations of middle leaders, staff and pupils are high and this is ensuring that identified areas are being tackled at a steady, measured pace. However, the pace of improvement could be more rapid. Senior leaders need to ensure that checks on the quality of teaching across both sites continue to be carried out with enough rigour so that inconsistencies in teaching are ironed out swiftly and, therefore, teaching and pupils' outcomes improve at a faster rate.

Senior and middle leaders are working collaboratively to set action plans for both school and subject improvement. Senior leaders are holding middle leaders to account regularly and, in turn, middle leaders are increasingly holding teachers to account. Middle leaders are reviewing information about pupils' achievement more often to plan intervention for underachieving groups and individual pupils. These actions are resulting in the stronger progress of current pupils, particularly in English and mathematics. Leaders are also working to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and high prior-attaining pupils' progress and attainment improves. Higher expectations are evident for all groups of pupils; however, there is little evidence

currently to show a demonstrable improvement in the progress and attainment of these groups of pupils.

Leaders have ensured that teachers' skills continually develop and they access professional development opportunities through the use of 'learning communities' in the school. A focus area for one 'learning community', identified as needing improvement at the previous inspection, is around building strategies to develop pupils' writing skills across the curriculum. On the day of the monitoring inspection, all staff were attending bespoke training to improve pupils' writing skills. Although work scrutinised in pupils' books on inspection indicates that pupils are being given more opportunities to write at length, this was still largely evident in English books.

The impact of leaders' actions can be seen in the improved behaviour and increasing engagement and involvement of pupils. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusion and staff manage behaviour effectively. Pupils are unequivocal in their pride for the school and being part of the diverse school community. They appreciate the extra efforts their teachers go to to help them improve and be successful in their learning. Some teachers use questioning skilfully to challenge pupils' thinking and encourage them to extend and justify their ideas. In such instances, pupils rise to the challenge and show attitudes that contribute to stronger learning and progress.

Leaders' rigorous approach to improving attendance is proving successful. Overall attendance is showing steady signs of improvement. In particular, persistent absence has reduced because of the targeted action leaders have taken. The work of the attendance team is contributing effectively to efforts to raise achievement for pupils and to ensure that pupils are safe. All staff receive up-to-date training in child protection and the 'Prevent' duty and they are well aware of what to do if a child makes a disclosure. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet. Pupils appreciate the school's focused days on 'rights and responsibilities' because it develops their knowledge and understanding of different risks in the local area and in wider society.

Governors are skilled and they are taking appropriate actions to challenge and support leaders. This includes a 'governors' action group' being formed to focus on monitoring and evaluating the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Governing body minutes indicate a strong level of challenge, and no stone is left unturned. Governors make regular visits to the school to discuss and evaluate with school leaders how well the school is doing.

External support

In order to improve the effectiveness of leadership and management within the school you have opened up the school to external scrutiny. Effective support from the local authority and a national leader of education is strengthening both senior and middle leadership and is acting as a 'critical eye' to support improvement areas, particularly in English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Darren Stewart
Her Majesty's Inspector