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8 December 2017

Mr Mark Brown
Principal
Winifred Holtby Academy
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Dear Mr Brown

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Winifred Holtby Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 7 December 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in March 2017, the academy was also judged to require improvement.

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 academy to become good.

The academy should take further action to:

- continue to improve the attendance and reduce the persistent absence of all pupils and particularly the disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- continue to reduce the variation in the quality of teaching and learning across all

subjects and year groups

- continue to improve the outcomes and progress of all pupils, including the disadvantaged.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, members of your senior leadership team and a group of governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body. I also held conversations with your school improvement partner and the executive principal of a neighbouring school to discuss the support they have provided to the school since the last inspection. Documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans and other relevant documents were scrutinised. I conducted short visits to several lessons with both you and your vice-principal responsible for teaching and learning. Alongside senior leaders, a sample of pupils' work was scrutinised. I also met with a group of pupils from Years 7 to 11 to evaluate their views on developments since the last inspection.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to staffing in the academy. You revised the structure of your leadership team and redistributed their roles and responsibilities. You introduced a core senior leadership team consisting of you and three vice-principals. You have replaced four members of staff in mathematics, two in science and two in English.

Main findings

You have a clear vision and unquestionable determination to ensure that the academy continues to improve since the last inspection. Your commitment is evident in the swift and robust actions you have taken since the last inspection to eradicate weak teaching and improve the quality of teaching and learning across the academy. You and your team have correctly identified the areas for improvement and have put in place a range of strategies to address them. You have slimmed down your leadership team to provide focus and strategically redistributed roles and responsibilities to match skills and expertise. As a result, leadership and management have improved. You have raised expectations across the school and you have communicated them clearly to both staff and pupils. The impact of your swift actions since the last inspection can be evidenced by the accelerated improvement in the quality of teaching and the improvements in attainment since March 2017. Your recent review of the curriculum resulted in additional time allocated to English across all year groups and appropriate time allocated to mathematics, science, humanities and modern foreign languages. Current school assessment information indicates that the improvement in attainment is continuing and the progress of key groups of pupils is improving, including the disadvantaged pupils. You have correctly identified and prioritised key groups of pupils who need

further support to improve their outcomes and have put in place appropriate plans to address barriers to further improvement. You agreed with me that there is more work to do here with increased urgency in order to see an impact on outcomes.

You and your team have ensured that the systems for tracking and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are thorough and detailed. The senior leader, overseeing this area, closely monitors the impact of strategies introduced since the last inspection. During our joint visits to lessons, you were able to demonstrate the consistent use of 'planning for progress' files by teachers across all subjects and year groups. Teachers use information more effectively to plan learning that meets the needs of all learners, including the disadvantaged pupils. Pupils are aware of their targets for each subject and teachers identify and use individual strengths and weaknesses to plan further support. The use of curriculum mentors through the 'YIPIYAP' initiative is effective and provides challenge and support for both the most able pupils and pupils who need to catch up, in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. You and your team reviewed the ability groups across the school and as a result, pupils are provided with more challenge across the ability range. In particular, you have used assessment information and your knowledge of boys' attitudes to learning to ensure that they study in groups which will provide appropriate challenge and aspirations. You have swiftly identified the subjects that require further improvement and you are working closely with your neighbouring school to provide support and development to staff from those curriculum areas.

Following the pupil premium review, you acted quickly to appoint a leader for this area and review the plans moving forward. Your revised pupil premium strategy is clearer and you spend funding appropriately to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils across the whole school. You and your team have raised the profile of disadvantaged pupils through regular 'challenge' meetings with subject leaders and more in-depth analysis of the performance of this group of pupils. Although provisional information indicates that the progress of disadvantaged pupils remained the same in 2017 as it was in 2016, current school assessment information indicates improvement in progress for the pupils currently at the school, including the most able. Leaders acknowledge that there is more work to be done here to ensure that the outcomes for the current Year 11 cohort reflect these improvements.

Since the last inspection, you and your team have taken robust actions to tackle the issue of attendance and in particular the absence of the disadvantaged pupils. You have strengthened your attendance team, introduced rewards for good attendance and continued to take appropriate actions to reduce holidays and unauthorised absences. As a result of these focused strategies, the persistent absence of the disadvantaged pupils has reduced and is now broadly in line with national averages. Almost all of the pupils who were identified for attendance intervention in September 2017 now show much-improved attendance.

The governance of the school has improved since the last inspection. A recent audit of skills has helped governors identify their strengths and areas for further development. Governors are aligned to different areas of the school and are involved effectively in staff appraisals. School leaders provide more simplified information to governors. As a result, members of the governing body are becoming more confident in providing the appropriate challenge to school leaders at all levels, through more robust questioning and accountability meetings.

External support

The external support to the academy has been provided mainly by a neighbouring school leader and a school improvement partner. The executive principal of the neighbouring school has been instrumental in providing support at leadership level in order to build capacity and support you with strategies for tackling the areas for improvement that you and your team have correctly identified. The support has also included development of staff in a number of subject areas, including history, computer science and modern foreign languages, and also moderation of assessments. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning overall and the accuracy of assessments have improved. Your school improvement partner meets regularly with you and has an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. He provides appropriate and effective challenge and support to you and your leaders. Consequently, you are able to maintain a clear focus on the impact of your actions on the areas of the school you have identified as needing improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis

Her Majesty's Inspector