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Mr Christopher Stokes
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Dear Mr Stokes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Leeds East Academy

Following my visit to your school on 1 February 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

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

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that governance is further sharpened by using the outcomes of an external review of governance, as recommended in the previous inspection report.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the principal, and senior and middle leaders of the school. I also held discussions with members of the multi-academy trust, including the executive principal and the chair of the local accountability board to evaluate the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Information about pupils' current progress and the quality of teaching was considered. I made brief visits to several lessons with senior leaders

and considered the quality of pupils' work. I spoke to two groups of pupils from Years 8 and 11 to consider their views on developments since the last inspection.

Context

There have been major staffing changes since the previous inspection. The leadership team has been reconfigured. Several members of the team have been appointed since the previous inspection, including the vice principal and middle leaders responsible for English, mathematics and science. Over 30 appointments have been made to the teaching staff. A number of new governors have taken up post to strengthen the governance of the school.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you have worked tirelessly to improve the quality of provision for pupils at the school. Working with other senior leaders, middle leaders, members of the governing body and the trust, you have led the school through a substantial period of change. At the same time, you have kept an unerring focus on improving the life chances of the pupils in your care. Leadership at the school is very strong. Your leadership is characterised by the highest expectations of staff and students alike, and improvements that you are making are securely based on strong evidence. Not one stone is left unturned and you exhibit a relentless pursuit of excellence that is mirrored by the trust and staff at the school.

You have developed a systematic approach to leadership. The information that you and your team gather on pupils' progress is of a high order. With equal rigour, you monitor the quality of teaching, and hold staff to account through performance management. These processes have been successfully knitted together to ensure that the quality of education on offer is improving. They are reflected in the well-focused school improvement plan. You are able to support teachers in improving their practice, pinpoint where pupils are making less strong progress and intervene accordingly. As a result, published outcomes in 2017 improved considerably from those of 2016, and inspection evidence shows that this record of improvement continues. The progress that pupils made in 2016 in English and mathematics, for example, is on average half a grade stronger per pupil than in 2015. In many other subjects, this rate of improvement was even stronger. Your strong and effective monitoring systems enable you to know exactly which groups of students and which subjects need further focus.

The quality of teaching is improving. Teachers use information that they have about the pupils in their class to plan activities that match their needs. During lessons, they question pupils well. They listen very carefully to what pupils say, and watch how well they are developing their skills and understanding. They then shape their next activities or questions accordingly. School leaders use the 'middle leader competency framework' to ensure that class teachers are supported and developed in their teaching. Different strategies, such as ensuring that learning begins within 60

seconds of the first pupil arriving, and the use of the 'red zone' (a period of intense, independent learning within lessons), are having a positive impact. There is a high level of consistency across the school, which ensures that all pupils understand what is required of them. One Year 11 pupil said to me, 'We have some of the best teachers we could ask for'. Other pupils agree that improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection are palpable.

Your systematic approach to ensuring that pupils attend school and behave well is also strong. When I spoke to pupils, they spoke at length about the improvements in behaviour, and the positive impact of the new behaviour policy. They say that it is very rare that any lessons are disrupted due to low-level misbehaviour, and that they are much more aware of the school rules and teachers' expectations of them. This level of clarity helps them to focus, and ensures that their peers do so too. As a result of a consistent approach to managing behaviour, the number of fixed-term exclusions has dropped significantly and is now well below the national average. Similarly, work to improve attendance has been successful. The rate of attendance this year is above the national average, and the percentage of pupils who are persistently absent is below the national average.

Again, in a very systematic way, you have altered the content of the curriculum so that pupils in key stage 4 spend more time studying fewer subjects. This ensures that their learning is deep, and that the standards they reach improve. Time is also given for additional support in English and mathematics if needed. Although systems and processes across the school have seen significant change, you have kept pupils, parents and carers in the loop. There is a real sense of coherence to the changes you have made. One member of staff commented that 'nothing is started that is not seen through', and that 'expectations are explicit, so everyone, therefore, knows what they are doing and what success looks like'.

Your seven core values are alive at school. Pupils are developing resilience and confidence. They show respect for one another and are becoming increasingly ambitious and positive. They are developing a thirst for excellence as they mirror their school leaders. They are punctual to lessons and to school.

You and other school leaders have developed a culture of improvement. Development plans are strong, and you are being successful in tackling the areas requiring improvement that were identified at the previous inspection. You are organising a review of governance in order to further sharpen governors' skills and increase their support and impact.

External support

You have been well supported by members of the White Rose Academies Trust, including the executive principal. Specifically, support for the development of behaviour systems and support for teachers new to the profession have had a positive impact. Partnership work with the GORSE Academy Trust is also continuing,

and members of the senior team reflect on how helpful this partnership is in developing professional dialogue and continuing to improve provision.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle
Her Majesty's Inspector