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11 June 2018

Mr James Christian  
Colne Valley High School  
Gillroyd Lane  
Linthwaite  
Huddersfield  
West Yorkshire  
HD7 5SP

Dear Mr Christian

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Colne Valley High School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 May 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 was judged to require improvement at its previous section 5 inspection.

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

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that exclusions of pupils reduce further, particularly for disadvantaged boys and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
- address with urgency the recent increase in some pupils' absence so that attendance improves to levels seen in the past
- ensure that recent actions to improve teaching swiftly reduce the remaining variation in the quality of teaching across subjects
- continue to enhance the skills of middle leaders in being able to check the work of their teams
- improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and members of your senior leadership team. I met with the executive principal of the trust and a representative from the local authority. I also met with a group of staff. I examined a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, those relating to assessment information, behaviour and bullying trends and attendance, as well as records of the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. I met with four members of the local governing board, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I visited lessons with the vice-principal who has responsibility for teaching and learning. I scrutinised a sample of pupils' work with two of your vice-principals. I talked to a group of pupils from Years 7 to 10. I also talked informally to pupils during lessons.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of staffing changes. Most of the senior leadership team have been appointed since the previous inspection. You have restructured the behaviour and safeguarding team to bring more capacity, including the recruitment of a new vice-principal with responsibility for behaviour. A new special educational needs coordinator joined your team in April 2018. You have appointed new subject leaders in English, science, computing and a new Year 10 achievement coordinator. You have also appointed a new subject leader for mathematics for September 2018. Fifteen new support staff and 18 new teachers have been appointed since the previous inspection.

## **Main findings**

Since the last inspection, you have established a rigorous system to enable leaders to carry out more thorough and regular checks on the quality of teaching. Middle leader training, including input from specialist leaders of education, is helping to raise expectations. Subject improvement plans are closely aligned to the school improvement plan. This ensures that staff are clear about the main priorities for improvement to move the school forward. Plans now focus on the actions required to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Training for middle leaders is leading to better checks on the effect of actions taken. However, you agree that there is still work to do to develop middle leaders' skills further so that expectations are consistently high.

An area for improvement at the previous inspection was to share best practice within the school to reduce inconsistencies in teaching quality. Your vice-principal has introduced forums for staff to share effective practice, such as the weekly 15-minute forum, where staff share ideas, and your reflective teacher programme. Professional development has focused particularly on strategies to engage boys. As a result, teaching is beginning to show signs of improvement. Pupils told me that there are more opportunities for them to discuss their learning and work together.

They also said that teachers explain topics more clearly and check for understanding before moving on to another topic. However, pupils feel that they are not challenged enough at times and their experience is not consistent across all subjects.

During visits to lessons, it was clear that where expectations from teachers are high, pupils are more engaged in their learning, especially boys. Work in pupils' books shows that expectations of presentation are improving. Teachers are checking for pupils' misconceptions more effectively. However, work in pupils' books shows that sometimes pupils do not correct basic errors accurately. Leaders acknowledge that there is further work to do to reduce the remaining variability in the quality of teaching so that pupils have a consistent experience no matter what class they are in.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve communication with parents and carers especially when resolving matters to do with bullying. Pupils told me that bullying does happen in school, but it is dealt with. However, some pupils said that staff sometimes do not deal with incidents of bullying quickly enough. The pupils I spoke to told me that a strength of the school is the personal development workshops they participate in, for example workshops with the local police, to learn about safety in the community and in school. Your behaviour team ensure that communication from parents, including follow-up actions, is now recorded. Your own parental survey results, including parental responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, show an increase in the number of parents who believe the school responds well to their concerns. Compared to at the time of the previous inspection more parents now would recommend the school. However, you acknowledge that there is still work to do to raise the profile of the school further with parents and within the community.

At the previous inspection, an area for improvement was to improve pupils' behaviour, especially the behaviour of boys. Pupils told me that one of the biggest changes has been improved behaviour. They told me that there are now consequences for not following the new school rules. The visible presence of the behaviour for learning team around the school and on the corridors is helping to reduce the number of incidents of weaker behaviour. This is also helping to improve pupils' punctuality to lessons. Your own records show that the number of behaviour incidents is declining, especially for boys. The number of fixed-term exclusions has continued to reduce since the previous inspection. However, you, the trust and the local authority acknowledge that the number of fixed-term exclusions remains too high, especially for disadvantaged boys and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The further reduction in the number of pupils excluded remains a main priority for the school.

In 2016, the progress made by pupils in their GCSE examination was well below that of similar pupils nationally. However, in 2017 outcomes improved and the progress pupils made in their GCSE examinations was in line with pupils with similar

starting points nationally. However, despite improvements, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils remained well below other pupils nationally. Current school information shows that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving in key stage 3, but remains variable in key stage 4. Leaders acknowledge that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is hampered by their high absence rates.

Pupils' attendance has declined since the last inspection. Rates of absence have been affected by the high number of pupils who have joined the school during the academic year, particularly in Year 11. However, for your constant cohort of pupils, attendance remains in line with the national average. You are not complacent and understand that improving attendance needs to be urgently addressed.

### **External support**

The executive principal, from the Mirfield Free Grammar and Sixth Form Multi-Academy Trust, provides effective support for the school. Since the previous inspection, the trust has ensured increased capacity at senior leadership team level. Additional appointments have been made to improve the capacity of the behaviour and welfare team. The trust appointed an additional vice-principal for behaviour and attendance, a lead practitioner for behaviour and a personalised learning coordinator to support more vulnerable pupils. This is beginning to have an effect, with behaviour improving across the school. The trust has also made arrangements for teachers and middle leaders to visit other schools to help raise their expectations further. The school has maintained good links with the local authority since becoming an academy. The local authority continue to support the school by working with the executive principal to identify where support is required.

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

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**