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27 November 2018

Mrs Sandra Govender
The Pinetree School
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Dear Mrs Govender

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Pinetree School

Following my visit to your school on 12 November 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 received a judgement of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspection. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in July 2017 the school was judged inadequate.

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

The school should take further action to:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that work is sufficiently challenging so that all pupils, particularly those known to be disadvantaged, make equally good progress
- continue the work started to reduce the level of persistent absence.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, a senior leader, your middle leaders, the chair of the board of trustees, the interim multi-academy trust chief executive officer (CEO) and pupils to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. We visited lessons together to talk to staff and to pupils about their

work. I evaluated a wide range of documents, including your rapid improvement and progress plan, and your updated information on pupils' attendance.

Context

The interim executive board was replaced by a local governing body and a chair of governors was elected in December 2017. There are seven governors, including the headteacher. In September 2018, the trust appointed an interim CEO for the Engage Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), who is the CEO of Unity Education Trust.

Since the inspection in July 2017, the deputy headteacher, who left in June 2018, has not been replaced. The trust is reviewing the leadership structure of the school. A new assistant headteacher has been appointed to fill the vacancy for leading personal development, behaviour and welfare, and you have made several new middle leader appointments. Two teaching assistants were appointed in September 2018. One teaching assistant left the school in October 2018 and another resigned in November 2018.

Main findings

Leaders have acted promptly, focusing on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You are providing staff with clear leadership and have worked hard on ensuring that the foundations for further improvements are secure. Your vision for the school is supported by staff, who are clear about their roles and consistent in their efforts to 'get the school to good' as quickly as possible.

Expectations of middle leaders are increasing. Consequently, middle leaders are taking on a more focused role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in the subject areas that they teach. They have added capacity to drive improvements across the school. They feel well supported and are motivated to play their part in school improvement. Middle leaders work closely with mainstream academies to moderate assessment. Visits to other schools in the trust help leaders to reflect on their practice and assist the planning of next steps.

My visits to classes showed the impact of some of the actions you have taken. Your staff use the information provided by leaders about the backgrounds, needs and interests of each pupil to plan suitable learning for them. Pupils are responding to the increased expectations of how they present their work. For example, the school's agreed rules, such as writing in pen and using a ruler, are now evident in pupils' books. Pupils are required to complete extended pieces of writing in different subject areas, supporting the development of their handwriting and composition skills. Incomplete work is challenged by teachers and completed by the pupils. However, some tasks remain too easy for pupils, resulting in them not achieving their full potential. Further work is needed on teaching and learning to ensure that pupil progress is maximised, particularly for the disadvantaged.

You and your team are successfully improving aspirations of what pupils can achieve at The Pinetree. This is leading to pupils trying harder and wanting to do better. Most pupils work purposefully in lessons. They show respect for their peers and for staff. Pupils speak positively about the changes you have made to the provision. Those spoken to during the inspection confirmed that they were encouraged to write at greater length in English and in a wide range of subjects. Pupils said that they were being helped to improve the presentation of their work and to improve their spelling. However, they often found the work lacked challenge, as it was a repeat of what they had done at their previous school.

The work since the previous inspection has been well supported by training. Middle leaders have responded positively to personalised training aimed at helping them to lead their subject areas more effectively. You are focusing professional development for staff clearly on the areas that require improvement. For example, writing at length in English and in a range of subjects is a whole-school focus. Staff say they value the training, the impact of which can be seen in pupils' improved work. You are also working closely with the interim CEO of the trust to provide further training and support for staff responsible for leading subjects.

The school's system for monitoring and recording attendance is strong. All staff take ownership of pupils' attendance. They believe that if learning is engaging pupils will attend on a regular basis. You can point to several individuals with whom you have had considerable success. Nevertheless, improvements continue to be hampered by the high persistent absence rate. Leaders are not afraid to prosecute parents if attendance remains low. You have successfully reduced persistent absence, but further work is required to lower it even further.

You have taken the time to refine your improvement plan so that the areas for action have clear, measurable targets. This enables staff to demonstrate the impact they are having on improving the school. The plan is steering improvement and providing the school with a well-defined strategic direction. Regular evaluation of your rapid improvement and progress plan is helping to keep improvements on track. Consequently, leaders, including governors and the interim CEO of the trust, understand what needs to be done, when and by whom.

The governing body is holding leaders to account for making improvements. There is a regular cycle of meetings, and governors are undertaking regular visits to the school. Under your leadership, it is clear how they have supported and challenged you and how the further improvements required will be addressed.

External support

Suffolk local authority conducts a termly quality assurance of the school's provision and undertakes monitoring visits to provide support and challenge. Norfolk local authority has conducted two review and monitoring visits to examine pupil provision. Governors share the strong commitment of senior leaders to swift

improvement and contribute through their duties, roles and responsibilities linked to improvement priorities. Since September 2018, you have drawn on the support of the interim CEO who has completed a review of the school. Plans are in progress for the school to have a school improvement adviser and to have the support of senior leaders of education, provided by the interim CEO. You work effectively with an adviser from the Department of Education, to monitor the school's improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the interim chief executive officer of the Engage Multi-Academy Trust board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop

Her Majesty's Inspector