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14 March 2019

Mr Paul Murphy  
New Line Learning Academy  
Boughton Lane  
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Kent  
ME15 9QL

Dear Mr Murphy

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to New Line Learning Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 7 March 2019, 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 that you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that you are taking to improve the academy 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust members 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 reduce inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- improve attendance and reduce fixed-term exclusions.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, the chief executive officer of Every Child Every Day Academy Trust, pupils, staff and the chairperson of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last

inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

I visited classrooms with you and scrutinised a sample of pupils' work. I reviewed safeguarding procedures at the school and evaluated documents provided by leaders.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, the school has made plans to join the Every Child Every Day Academy Trust. This is currently planned to take place in September 2019. New Line Learning was a member of the Future Schools Trust at the time of the monitoring visit. However, all school-improvement support is provided currently by the Every Child Every Day Academy Trust in anticipation of the academy formally joining the trust.

## **Main findings**

You and senior leaders are determined to embed improvements across the school. Since the previous inspection, you have focused your efforts on implementing a range of new policies and procedures. You have successfully galvanised leaders and staff into making improvements in several school areas. These are detailed and monitored through the school improvement plan. Notably, you have embedded new assessment processes and new quality assurance procedures, overhauled performance management, introduced new behaviour and attendance systems, and ensured that middle leaders are held to account. These improvements contributed to the increases in pupils' progress rates in 2018. Pupils' progress at the end of Year 11 improved significantly in 2018, particularly in English. You recognise that there is still work to be done to ensure that consistently strong teaching leads to improved pupils' progress rates across all subjects.

You have successfully implemented a distributed leadership model. Middle leaders are involved in setting department policies on assessment and in monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within their departments. They feel valued by leaders and believe that they are a key part of the improvement process. Staff said that training is very useful in ensuring that they consistently apply strengthened school policies. Consequently, there is a consistent approach to implementing the school's main priorities for improvement. These are referred to as the 'big 5' and include engagement, progress, routines, questioning and assessment. Overall, staff morale is high. They believe that you lead by example and model the high standards that you expect from others.

Able supported by your academy leadership team, you have ensured that teachers use questioning increasingly well to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Training has been effective in improving teachers' questioning so that pupils have opportunities to think hard in lessons, consider their responses to questions and develop their understanding of topics. Teachers address

misconceptions increasingly well so that pupils are well supported when they find activities difficult.

Work in pupils' books shows that challenge in lessons is improving, particularly in English and mathematics. In key stage 3, teachers plan lessons well and set tasks that interest and engage pupils. This is increasingly the case in key stage 4, where teaching has improved. However, there is still a legacy from previous weak teaching, particularly in mathematics and science, which means that pupils still have substantial gaps in their knowledge.

The school is making good progress towards improving the assessment system so that teachers understand where pupils are in their learning. For example, each teacher knows how well their pupils are making progress in their subjects because they follow the school's assessment policy. Teachers have an increasingly strong understanding of which pupils require further support.

A new scheme of work has been introduced in mathematics in key stage 3. This has enabled teachers to plan activities that increase opportunities for pupils to practise problem-solving and reasoning. Consequently, key stage 3 pupils are deepening their knowledge in mathematics. Teachers have also introduced more opportunities in key stage 4 for pupils to practise problem-solving and reasoning. However, this has not yet had the same positive effect on pupils' understanding as it has had in key stage 3.

Attendance remains stubbornly low. However, the number of pupils absent so far this year suggests that your new attendance strategies are having an impact. Leaders have steadfastly implemented a range of measures to help pupils who do not attend regularly. For example, a school minibus picks up certain pupils in the morning so that they arrive at school on time. The newly appointed family intervention officer is increasingly effective and regularly visits families at home to offer support for vulnerable pupils. Nevertheless, low attendance remains a barrier to good learning.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is positive. Pupils reported that their peers behave respectfully towards each other and that teachers implement the new behaviour system very well. This means that lessons are purposeful and calm. Although the proportion of pupils who receive fixed-term exclusions is still too high, there are positive signs of improvement in this area. Last year, this proportion dropped dramatically and so far this year, fixed-term exclusion rates have dropped further.

You have ensured that a detailed and purposeful plan is in place for the allocation of pupil premium funds and extra funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff understand the importance of improving the provision for these pupils because leaders have used regular meetings to highlight how extra funding is spent and which strategies have been effective. Leaders

evaluate the spending of additional funding during regular meetings with other senior leaders and with middle leaders. Progress information is used to monitor the effectiveness of the funding. This is reported to governors and the pupil premium leader has presented their findings to them. Governors are well informed about the effectiveness of additional funding.

The local governing body has been strengthened since the previous inspection with the addition of appropriately skilled governors. The chair of governors has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors hold leaders to account increasingly well. They regularly conduct activities within school that allow them to check on what leaders tell them in meetings. For example, governors meet with middle leaders in order to offer support and expertise, and to hold them to account. Middle leaders and senior leaders make presentations to governors about the effectiveness of their actions. Governors are very well informed about the effectiveness of school improvement strategies.

### **External support**

School leaders and teachers benefit from the range of support that Every Child Every Day Academy Trust has provided. Staff have had opportunities to visit other schools within the trust and work with colleagues in the trust's other schools on the moderation of pupils' work and the sharing of what works well in lessons. There is an increasingly strong relationship between New Line Learning and the other schools in the trust.

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

Yours sincerely

Harry Ingham

**Her Majesty's Inspector**