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Dr Paul Doherty
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Dr Doherty

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to King Solomon High School

Following my visit to your school on 2 December 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- eradicate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching so that it is all at least good
- check that actions taken to close the gap in achievement between students with special educational needs, disadvantaged pupils and others are effective
- ensure that new senior leaders and governors are clear about roles and responsibilities when taking up their posts so that the pace of improvement does not falter.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, four other governors and two representatives of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and self-evaluation were reviewed. I looked at evidence of the school's work including safeguarding, achievement and behaviour tracking information. I joined you on a short tour of the school over lunchtime and spoke informally to some students.

Context

Further staff changes have taken place since my last visit. You have taken on the leadership of the school in an acting capacity as a result of the last headteacher leaving unexpectedly at the start of this term. You remain headteacher of Trinity Catholic High School but will lead King Solomon High School until a permanent headteacher is appointed. Three new deputy headteachers will be appointed this week. Further senior and middle leadership roles and responsibilities will be confirmed once these appointments have been made. By the end of this term, a further six teachers will have left the school. Three new teachers have already been appointed and recruitment for the remaining vacancies is on-going. Following the external review of governance, the governing body has been restructured. Two members now act as joint Chair of a smaller governing body. A review of administration and inclusion needs has taken place and staffing levels adjusted accordingly. You have extended the school day, to provide more time for teaching and learning activities.

Main findings

Work to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report has continued, despite the considerable changes in senior leadership and governance. The school improvement plan has been rewritten and monitoring roles have been allocated to named governors. Governors are asking more challenging questions and now use the plan to assess the impact of improvements on pupil progress. Milestones have been added to ensure that targets are being met quickly enough. Improved monitoring systems allow governors to identify when pupil progress is less than good. When targets are missed, leaders are held to account more strongly by the governing body and further interventions are agreed.

In 2014 more students in Year 11 achieved five GCSE passes, including in English and mathematics. Overall, GCSE results were above the national average but there remains some variability across subjects. Achievement in mathematics is lower than in English and students made less progress than predicted in both subjects. Students

achieved less well in history, geography and religious education than they did in art and science. Some gaps remain between the performance of disadvantaged students or those with special educational needs and others at the school.

The proportion of teaching that is at least good has risen, although a small amount of inadequate teaching remains. You are addressing this through mentoring and professional development, targeted at individual teachers' needs. Where improvements are not seen, you have held teachers to account and some have left the school as a result. You are determined that teaching will be good across the school so that students can attain the aspirational targets set.

You are working to strengthen the leadership and management capacity of the school. The structure of the senior leadership team has been reviewed and you have created three deputy headteacher posts. You plan to recruit additional senior teachers, including the head of sixth form, in the next few weeks. All new leadership posts have been filled by internal candidates until substantive appointments can be made. This has ensured that the areas for improvement have continued to be addressed. Middle leaders are clear about their own roles and report weekly on the performance of their departments. They appreciate the regular feedback and support they receive from acting senior leaders. They say that this has helped them to identify where further work is needed and when their work has been successful.

Recent initiatives to improve behaviour and safety are now fully embedded. Teachers and leaders are spending less time on managing behaviour and can focus more strongly on improving teaching and learning. Attendance rates are above the national average and no temporary exclusions have been necessary this term. The uniform policy is strictly enforced but sanctions imposed for uniform issues are reducing rapidly. Effective safeguarding systems and good site security ensure students are kept safe.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

You are using external support effectively to ensure that improvements are made as quickly as possible. The local authority has arranged for your help to lead the school and has identified consultants and advisors to address specific improvement areas. They have provided training for senior and middle leaders and supported your special educational needs coordinator. A local authority advisor has been seconded to work with you for the remainder of this year to ensure there is sufficient leadership capacity while new leaders are inducted. The local authority school improvement advisor visits the school several times a term to ensure that targets are met and the pace of improvement is rapid. A whole school learning review was conducted by the local authority last week. The review found evidence that teaching

standards have improved and pupils are making better progress. Local authority advisors evaluated standards of teaching and learning in the sixth form and behaviour and safety as good. The external review of governance has now been completed and governors have undertaken additional training. You have also drawn on the support of practitioners from your own school to share good practice.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Redbridge and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector