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7 May 2015

Ash Venkatesh
Littleover Community School
Pastures Hill
Littleover
Derby
DE23 4BZ

Dear Mr Venkatesh

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Littleover Community School

Following my visit with Roary Pownall, Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 6 May 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The inspection also focused on relevant aspects of the quality of leadership and management at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a teacher responsible for ensuring effective use of the pupil premium, a member of staff from a pupil referral unit, groups of pupils, two carers of looked after children, and the chair and vice-chair of governors. The lead inspector conducted a telephone interview with a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors evaluated the aspects of the school development plan and the school's self-evaluation which related to disadvantaged students. Inspectors also considered past and current achievement data relating to disadvantaged students, and scrutinised the systems in place to track the progress made by these students.

Context

Around one in eight of Littleover Community School's students are identified as disadvantaged. This is about half the national average. Twenty-five disadvantaged

students completed Year 11 in 2014. In November 2014, a teacher became responsible for overseeing the use of the school's pupil premium funding.

Students, including disadvantaged students, have performed well at Littleover Community School over several years. However, in 2014 only a third of disadvantaged students in Year 11 made the progress expected of them in GCSE mathematics, based on their first examination entry. Closer scrutiny during inspection showed that by the time they had completed Year 11, this success rate had almost doubled – 62% of disadvantaged students made the progress expected of them in this subject area.

Attainment gaps in the school between disadvantaged students and their peers increased across subject areas in 2014, including in English and mathematics, when compared to the previous year. However, the main contributory factor was that this small cohort had lower levels of prior attainment on entry to the school than previous cohorts.

School leaders are aware that improving the achievement of disadvantaged students is of great importance and there are several references to this in their self-evaluation documentation. However, this priority does not feature prominently enough in school development plans.

The impact of actions taken to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students is not evaluated thoroughly enough. Members of staff express views on which activities are more successful than others, but the evidence for their judgements is not made clear. This includes those activities which are funded by the pupil premium.

Senior leaders provided a detailed breakdown of what the pupil premium has been spent on in the past, what it is currently being spent on, and what it will be spent on in the future. A small proportion of this extra funding is not being used for the purpose for which it is intended – to increase the attainment of disadvantaged students. An example of this is to fund whole staff training on safeguarding. However, this was the exception rather than the norm.

The statement on the use of pupil premium published on the school's website at the time of inspection was not adequate. It was considerably out of date and did not contain sufficient detail about how the funding was spent and the effect it had on the attainment of disadvantaged students.

Only six disadvantaged students completed Year 13 in 2014. The proportion of non-disadvantaged students who completed sixth form education was much higher. The disadvantaged students achieved well and in line with their peers. While this number is low, senior leaders state an ambition to increase this and intend to do so through greater consideration of disadvantaged students' individual circumstances; there are an increased number of applications from disadvantaged students to begin Year 12 in September.

Governors, although they were aware that the school's website statement did not meet requirements, are not knowledgeable enough about the achievement of disadvantaged students or the use of pupil premium funding. Therefore, they cannot effectively hold senior leaders to account in this regard. They are in the process of addressing this. The vice-chair has arranged relevant training for later this year, and the governing body plans to appoint one of their members to become a link governor for the achievement of disadvantaged students at their next meeting.

In September 2014, the headteacher gave a member of staff an additional responsibility to ensure effective use of the pupil premium. Due to an unforeseen change in circumstances, this teacher could only commit two hours a week to this important role. This is not sufficient to perform the role to best effect, especially considering all the potentially effective ideas this member of staff has for future activity. The headteacher is aware of this and plans to address it for the next academic year.

Members of staff at the school, including senior leaders, know their students very well. This includes those who are disadvantaged, and these students are identified as such on entry to the school. Disadvantaged students' progress is assessed and tracked on a regular basis. The achievement of these students is discussed as a separate agenda item at progress review meetings. Where underachievement is identified, teachers work with middle and senior leaders to create appropriate strategies to address it including, where necessary, pastoral help.

Teachers offer a wide range of academic support to ensure that students are given the best chance to succeed. This includes support sessions before school, during breaks and after school. Revision sessions were available in the Easter holidays, specifically for disadvantaged students.

Students interviewed appreciated the lengths their teachers go to in order to ensure they make good progress. They know that if they underachieve, this will be addressed. If students need support, they know where to find it.

The support – both pastoral and academic – given to the small number of children who are looked after is highly effective and is appreciated by both the students and their carers. One of these students said, 'School has always been there for me.' Carers feel that members of staff, particularly the learning mentors and the senior leader responsible for these students, are helpful, accessible and set high standards for the children in their care.

External support

The local authority works with all headteachers across their area to establish city-wide priorities. One of these is to increase the achievement of disadvantaged students. In this regard, a local authority representative has worked with the headteacher and the governing body to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. Her findings are accurate and the advice given to school leaders,

including governors, is appropriate. The headteacher appreciates that the work of the local authority representative is of great value. As a result, the amount of support and challenge is set to increase considerably in the next academic year.

The strengths in the school's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged pupils effectively to achieve their potential are:

- Members of staff support disadvantaged students very well as individuals and offer a wide range of extra help to give them the best chance of succeeding.
- Disadvantaged students' progress is assessed and tracked on a regular basis; subsequently teachers, supported by middle and senior leaders, design plans and activities to address any underachievement when it is identified.
- The pastoral support given to looked after children in particular is effective and highly valued by students and their carers.
- School leaders are beginning to take into account the circumstances of disadvantaged students when they apply to join the sixth form.
- A member of staff has been given responsibility for overseeing actions to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students.

The weaknesses in the school's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged pupils effectively to achieve their potential are:

- Areas for improvement are not given sufficient prominence in the school's development plans.
- The school does not precisely evaluate the impact of actions taken to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students.
- Governors are not currently knowledgeable enough to effectively challenge school leaders.
- The member of staff with responsibility for ensuring effective use of pupil premium funding has not been given enough time to carry out this role most effectively.
- A small proportion of pupil premium funding is not used for what it is intended.
- The statement on the school's website about the use of the pupil premium does not meet requirements.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that priorities around improving the achievement of disadvantaged students are adequately reflected in the school's improvement plans.
- Ensure that all pupil premium spending is justified, that the impact of the actions taken is evaluated, and that the website statement in this regard complies with requirements.
- Improve governors' knowledge and understanding of issues relating to disadvantaged students, including the use of pupil premium funding, so that the governing body can effectively hold leaders to account.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services for Derby, to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Education Funding Agency and as below. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Chair of the Governing Body
cc. Local authority
cc. The Education Funding Agency (EFA)