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Mr Gareth Roscoe
Headteacher
The Queen Katherine School
Appleby Road
Kendal
Cumbria
LA9 6PJ

Dear Mr Roscoe

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Queen Katherine School

Following my visit with Charles Lowry Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 12 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, members of the senior leadership team, several groups of teachers and additional support staff and two members of the governing body including the governor responsible for reporting on the achievement and quality of provision for disadvantaged pupils. A telephone conversation was held with the executive headteacher for the multi academy trust. Inspectors met with groups of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. Inspectors also scrutinised the single central record, self-evaluation and development planning documents relating to disadvantaged pupils as well as the appropriate school data, attendance and tracking records. Pupils' exercise books were also scrutinised. Two learning walks of the school were conducted by inspectors with a particular focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

Context

The Queen Katherine School is a larger than average secondary school. The Queen Katherine School is the lead institution within a local multi academy trust and is also a member of the South Lakes Federation. Although The Queen Katherine School converted to become an academy it is still referred to within the academy, in publications and locally as a school. About 15% of pupils currently enrolled at the school are eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding).

The achievement of disadvantaged pupils

The headteacher and senior leaders are beginning to bring about a cultural change where the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils is given a higher priority. Data, monitoring and tracking systems now have a greater focus on the performance of disadvantaged pupils. More focused intervention strategies and appropriate additional support measures have been introduced. There is improved coordination between senior leaders and middle leaders to enable speedy intervention to assist improvement. Staff have access to more comprehensive information about disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders acknowledge that these systems and initiatives require sustained and further embedding.

The gap between the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers remains too large and is not closing at a sufficiently rapid rate. Current school data indicate that the gap for present Year 11 pupils will remain significant. School data indicate that the gap for disadvantaged pupils in Year 10 is closing more rapidly in English but this is less so for mathematics. School leaders recognise that there needs to be more rapid acceleration in closing the progress and attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in mathematics. The progress of disadvantaged pupils at Key Stage 3, while closing, still remains a challenge for the school. A strong emphasis on confidence-building skills and focused intervention in numeracy and literacy has closed the gap in Year 7 in English and mathematics. School leaders acknowledge that this positive development requires sustaining and further embedding as these pupils move on to Year 8. A relatively low percentage of disadvantaged pupils join the school sixth form: those who do achieve well. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains well below that of their peers. School leaders have recognised this and plans are in place to refocus and sharpen practice and procedures.

While self-evaluation and development planning for disadvantaged pupils are detailed they do not contain impact evaluations on strategies and improvement initiatives. Key milestones need to be established by which the impact of actions can be measured and noted so as to ascertain and demonstrate ongoing progress or to alert staff where there is insufficient impact and further actions are required. Teaching and learning are not effectively monitored so as to ascertain that strategies

to improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils are having an impact, are embedded and developed across all subjects. Data analysis by inspectors and discussions with pupils indicate that intervention strategies to enable rapid improvement in the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils are not consistently applied across all subjects and within all classes.

Changes to the curriculum offer are having an impact on the improving progress that disadvantaged pupils are making at Key Stage 3. The introduction of 'mind set' courses at the commencement of Year 7 and more focused literacy and numeracy intervention strategies has enabled the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers to be closed in English and mathematics. Careers education has improved and this has contributed to the reduction of NEETs (not in education, employment or training) for disadvantaged pupils from 13% in 2012/13 to 4% in 2013/14. Further curriculum changes are planned at Key Stage 4 to develop more appropriate pathways and career options.

The school works well with external agencies, including social services and the police to understand better the barriers to learning that some pupils encounter. A number of case studies referenced by staff demonstrated how school staff had guided a number of youngsters through their challenging circumstances and promoted opportunities for them to progress in their learning and establish career pathways. Disadvantaged pupils are supported in terms of additional learning resources, school trips and visits to museums, art galleries, the theatre and to urban centres such as Manchester and London. Changes to the allocation of pupil premium funding have recently been introduced so that the individual needs of pupils can be better identified and appropriately supported. Senior leaders acknowledge that this practice needs to be further embedded and refined. The school has robust systems for communicating with parents and informing them of the target grades and current progress of their sons and daughters.

Governors give the achievement and quality of provision for disadvantaged pupils a high profile. A governor with responsibility for monitoring the provision for disadvantaged pupils reports to the governing body. She also visits the school regularly to discuss relevant matters with appropriate staff. Governors are fully aware that the school needs to close the gap more rapidly in attainment and progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Staff and governors receive suitable safeguarding training.

External support

School leaders welcome external evaluation of provision. The multi academy trust provides consultancy, advisory and partnership support. The school works well with

a number of external organisations to support the well-being of disadvantaged pupils.

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

- robust monitoring systems that both measure the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and have informed and raised the profile of these pupils across school staff
- effective programmes for literacy and numeracy intervention in Year 7 that have contributed to closing the progress gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in English and mathematics
- the changed focus on careers education which has contributed to closing the NEETs gap significantly for disadvantaged pupils
- regular reporting to parents of disadvantaged pupils on how well their sons and daughters are doing and their progress set against their targets.

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

- current strategies, particularly in mathematics, to close rapidly the gaps between the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers are not having sufficient and speedy impact
- the lack of timely milestones by which the impact of actions taken to improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils are evaluated and where necessary strategies readjusted to accelerate improvement
- not enough monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning with regard to the impact of strategies to improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils
- inconsistent application of strategies to improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils in some subjects and within some classes
- well-below average attendance for disadvantaged pupils when compared to their peers.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the progress and attainment gaps, particularly in mathematics, are closed more rapidly between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

- Establish timely milestones within improvement plans that offer periodic opportunities to reflect upon and evaluate progress made and where progress is not accelerating as expected to take the necessary measures to ensure it does.
- Monitor more regularly the impact of teaching and learning on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils to ensure consistency of application across all provision.
- Continue to improve and refine the impact of pupil premium funding so that the needs of the individual pupils are tackled and their achievement outcomes improved.
- Sharpen up procedures to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

I am copying this letter to the Acting Corporate Director of Children's Services for Cumbria, to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector