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Trevor Bowen  
Headteacher  
Almondbury Community School  
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West Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Bowen

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Almondbury Community School**

Following my visit to your school on 5 November 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2015. 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 recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, representatives of the governing body and representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the section 5 inspection in June 2015. The school improvement plans, English and mathematics subject leaders' action plans and the school's system for checking student progress were evaluated. Other documents were scrutinised, including the outcomes of monitoring activities, reports to governors and local authority notes of visit.

## **Context**

Almondbury Community School has undergone significant changes over the last 12 months, with many of these being implemented from September 2015. In that time, 24 teachers and support staff have left and five new temporary members of staff have taken up positions. The school has been organised into three phases: the 'engagement phase', which incorporates Nursery to Year 4 pupils, the 'cooperation phase', which includes Year 5 to Year 8 pupils, and Year 9 to 11 pupils are in the 'aspiration phase'. In addition to this, school leaders have grouped students into a house system, where children from Nursery up to pupils in Year 11 come together for collective activities. Furthermore, a restructuring of the leadership team now means the school has leaders in place to manage English and mathematics across the whole school, as well as achievement leaders of a wide variety of subjects. There are also newly appointed leaders for managing provision for disadvantaged students and others who are vulnerable.

## **Main findings**

You and your senior leadership team are unyielding in your determination, drive and enthusiasm to make improvements, and this is evident in the way they talk passionately about how they are going to do that. This is exemplified in a clearly focused school improvement plan, which rightly identifies key actions for improvement. Furthermore, other leaders in the school talk confidently about the impact their actions are starting to have on driving improvement and they are aware of what still needs to be achieved. In order to sharpen these improvement plans to ensure maximum impact on student outcomes, further consideration needs to be given as to how the plans are going to be effectively monitored and checked for impact.

Becoming 'one school' and having a shared vision and ethos across the school underpins all of the school's planned actions for improvement. There is a real commitment and passion from staff about the strengths and opportunities that come from being an 'all through' school. Students are benefiting from the sharing of staff expertise and specialisms, and staff are embracing opportunities themselves to widen their own knowledge and skills. Furthermore, students are able to access a much broader range of resources and facilities, particularly in science, physical education and technology which is ensuring accelerated progress across a range of subjects.

Changes in the way leaders work across the whole school, and specifically in English and mathematics, is making a real difference to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders working collaboratively across all phases are ensuring that improvements in writing can be sustained across all the key stages, and that the more challenging mathematics curriculum is being embedded and reinforced at regular intervals to ensure students are making better progress. A consistent

approach to marking is now being applied across the school. Leaders are currently assessing the impact of this on standards.

More effective systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning are now in place. This information is now being used to identify where individual teachers need support. An improved performance management system has been developed, linked directly to the school improvement plan, and teachers are being held to account for improving students' outcomes.

Student outcomes for the end of Key Stage 4 improved, from 37% of students achieving 5 GCSEs grade A\* to C, including English and mathematics, in 2014 to 50% in 2015. Furthermore, the proportion of students attaining grade A\* to C in mathematics rose from 43% in 2014 to 73% this year. The proportion of students making expected progress improved in both English and mathematics, and school leaders are now rightly focusing on ensuring all students make good progress across all year groups in all subjects. Leaders are developing the school's systems to track student's progress accurately in light of the national changes in assessment practice. A range of information is being used to identify students who are working below the level that is expected. Support programmes and interventions are being implemented so that students may catch up quickly.

Governors have undergone significant change since the school became an all-through community school. After significant restructuring, the governing body is now strengthened, and holds the same steely determination as that of the headteacher and senior leaders to make rapid improvement. As a result, the governing body now has a broad range of skills to challenge and support leaders in a strategic way. They have not yet applied their skills to closely monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's planned actions for improvement on a regular basis.

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

### **External support**

The local authority has provided timely and effective guidance for the headteacher and senior leaders to develop the school's improvement plan and has provided support to strengthen the leadership of mathematics. They have also negotiated a supplementary support package for middle leaders from the Pennine Teaching Alliance, which is in its early stages of implementation. The local authority will take a pivotal role in monitoring the effectiveness of this support.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Kirklees local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Lithgow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**