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Lauren Thorpe
Principal
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Dear Ms Thorpe

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Compass School Southwark

Following my visit to your school on 22 January 2016, 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 May 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 to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with seven middle leaders. I held discussions with pupils from Years 7 to 9. I met with two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. The school improvement plans were evaluated. I examined the single central record of recruitment checks. You accompanied me during short visits to classes. We observed teaching in Years 7 to 9. I spoke to pupils and staff and looked at pupils' work. I also considered the review of the use of the pupil premium.

Context

Since the last inspection, the school has moved into alternative refurbished buildings on the same temporary site. There are currently pupils in Years 7 to 9. Two teachers and one member of support staff have left the school. Nine teachers and six additional adults have joined the school. One member of the governing body has left and two new governors have joined the governing body.

Main findings

You, senior leaders and members of the governing body have wasted no time in tackling issues for improvement. Working effectively together, you have put your energy into taking action to bring about improvements. You have a clear vision and coherent and strategic plans, which address the key priorities.

You have communicated higher expectations of teaching, learning and assessment to all staff. Teachers and subject leaders are clearer about what is expected of them. Through regular training sessions and guidance for staff, the senior leadership team are making sure that teachers use features of high-quality teaching to help pupils learn well. This includes better feedback to pupils on their work and how to improve it further. Pupils are expected to respond to teachers' comments and suggestions more frequently. Leaders make more regular checks on the consistency of teaching to see whether practice is improving. They also identify where it should be better. Together with coaching and additional support for selected staff, this is helping to raise the standard of teaching across the school.

The recommended review of the pupil premium spending was completed last November. It has helped to identify strategies to improve the way the funding is used. These have been adopted quickly. Across the school, there is a much clearer focus on provision for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and members of the governing body check more closely how well disadvantaged pupils achieve compared with the others, and their behaviour and welfare.

You have improved the school's procedures to check and measure the progress all groups of pupils make. In addition, you have sharpened the way disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are identified and given support. You have appointed new members of staff to the middle leadership team who bring valuable expertise. They provide better additional support for selected pupils than in the past. Pupils at risk of falling behind are identified more quickly than before. Expectations for the most-able pupils have been raised. Tasks are chosen more carefully so that pupils tackle more demanding work. The school's assessment information suggests that, from their starting points, the rates of pupils' progress are accelerating.

Middle leaders are increasingly accountable for the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement within their areas of responsibility. Senior leaders and the governing body ask searching questions of subject and faculty leaders and set ambitious targets. Well-selected training is helping middle leaders to develop their roles so that they are able to play a stronger part in driving improvements. Subject leaders

check the quality of teaching in their subjects and the quality of work in pupils' books more regularly. They monitor the impact of the changes they have made and the consistency of initiatives they have introduced.

Pupils told me that behaviour has improved. They like the clearer reward systems you have introduced and say that staff use them more reliably. They appreciate the greater consistency with which staff deal with low level disruption. As a result, they are confident that the pace of their progress is improving. Detailed records of any poor behaviour are analysed closely. They show a marked reduction in instances of poor behaviour in lessons and around the school. The leadership team have also made the importance of attending school every day clear to the school community. Weekly competitions between 'Learning Family' groups and 'house' teams, as well as certificates and rewards for pupils with the highest attendance, help to promote regular attendance. Compared with attendance rates over the same period last year, pupils' attendance rates since September 2015 have risen considerably. You are also tackling persistent absence. However, the impact on reducing the proportion of pupils whose attendance is too low has not been as rapid, and therefore is a priority for further improvement.

External support

You have actively sought high-quality external support and expertise to help the school to improve quickly. Senior leaders and governors have responded positively to recommendations from the pupil premium review. Timely reviews of other aspects of the school's work, including behaviour, and teaching and learning in English and mathematics, are supporting the school's improvement drive. Leaders and governors have made a point of establishing informal partnerships with local schools to provide additional professional development for staff and improve pupils' progress.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for London Borough of Southwark. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Madeleine Gerard

Her Majesty's Inspector