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Mrs Andria Hanham
The Mandeville School
Ellen Road
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Dear Mrs Hanham

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Mandeville School

Following my visit to your school on 24 May 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 November 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.

The school should take further action to:

- reduce the gaps between the performance of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government), and reduce even further the occasions they are absent from school and the incidence of when they are excluded.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the vice-principal. I also met with other senior leaders, a representative of the former interim executive board and the chair of the newly formed governing body. I met with a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with a group of five Year 10 pupils. You led me on a tour of

the school and provided me with a range of the school's documents to review. Your personal assistant showed me the checks she makes on adults working or volunteering at the school. I made a brief tour of the new sixth-form area with leaders of the 16–19 study programmes.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, which judged the school to require improvement, there have been considerable changes to the staff. A new vice-principal has been appointed to start in September 2016. New subject leaders for mathematics, history and physical education have been appointed. A restructuring of the support staff is under way and there have been many adjustments to serving teachers' contracts and levels of pay. The interim executive board was disbanded in the middle of May. A new governing body began its work a week ago. Discussions are under way with a local partner school to incorporate The Mandeville School as part of a multi-academy trust. The Secretary of State has given approval in principle to the proposed sponsorship arrangements.

Main findings

You have taken firm control of the school. You are ably supported by your vice-principal who has an excellent understanding of the task facing the growing leadership team. You have already begun the process of improving teaching and made a big difference to pupils' behaviour. This is remarkable since you only took up post days before the last inspection. You took on the leadership of a school that had suffered from instability for some time. There had been several changes of principal in the run-up to your appointment.

The school is now a calm and orderly place where pupils say that behaviour is much better than it was six months ago. Pupils are mainly smart and proud of their uniform. They respect the site and keep it tidy and free from litter. You have set out clear standards for behaviour and established a set of clear rules which all are expected to obey. This has meant that, for the time being, a higher than national proportion of pupils are still being excluded. You have permanently excluded a few pupils whose behaviour was a risk to themselves or others. However, you have also introduced a very effective system for recording incidents so that year leaders are able to check how each pupil is behaving. Those whose behaviour is causing concern are now challenged earlier. Some are required to spend time in 'inclusion' so that they can amend their behaviour and return to learning quickly. One pupil told me, 'It must work. I was in there once and haven't been back since.' Pupils like the rewards system that you have introduced. They also like the praise they receive in assembly when things go well. The number of sessions missed as a consequence of pupils being excluded is set to fall, as the impact of all this work has the desired effect.

Teachers are now able to focus much more on good-quality teaching because they have to worry less about managing behaviour. There is some strong practice which

is spreading across the school. Teachers plan together so that they reduce the amount of time they are spending preparing lessons. We agreed that they should take more direct account of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Some of these pupils are very bright and could do even better in subjects such as mathematics, for example, if they had more direct help in lessons with written English.

Subject leaders are also beginning to sustain the improvements you have started. Subject leaders are sharing the work of checking the quality of teaching on a daily basis. They are helped by the year leaders who are skilfully led by one of the assistant principals. This strong team takes turns to tour the school, ensuring that everyone is working effectively at all times. Year leaders also monitor carefully the logs written by teachers so that any disruption to learning is dealt with quickly. This means that all members of the community have a growing sense of confidence in the school's systems. This contributes to much faster progress as learning is disrupted less frequently.

Rightly, you have tightened up the arrangements for teachers' pay and rewards. Governors are fully supportive of this approach to rigorous performance management. While this was necessary to make the structure fair and transparent, it is also helping you reduce the significant budget deficit. With the governors, you are adopting a range of other necessary cost-saving measures. You are managing to make these spending reductions, however, without seriously affecting the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Some members of staff are being moved to new, more productive work roles, for example. You are also ensuring that they are properly trained for these new roles. Many of the support staff are also facing changes to their duties. Such changes are being made in the best interests of the pupils.

Most notable is your relentless focus on making sure that all pupils receive the best possible education. You know that the quality of teaching in mathematics must improve. You also know that White British boys do less well than any other group in the school, especially if they are eligible for the pupil premium or have special educational needs or disability. You showed me your convincing plans for tackling these two important aspects of the school's work.

The vice-principal provided very detailed information about the current progress and performance of pupils in the school. He set out clearly the measures taken to confirm the reliability of this information. The forecast results for Year 11 represent a considerable improvement on last year's GCSE outcomes. You both indicated how you are changing the curriculum to ensure that a greater proportion of pupils achieve even more in future years.

Leaders of the 16–19 study programmes were able to show how their work is leading to improvements in their key stage over time. There are many more pupils wishing to join the sixth form in September 2016. There is a wider range of courses available for them to study which make best use of the subject knowledge of teachers currently on the staff. The new facilities for students on 16–19 study

programmes are helping to make the Mandeville sixth form an attractive choice. The sports academy extends the positive choice available; progression from this pathway continues to be one of the school's overall strengths.

The new governing body has a good blend of skills and expertise to support the school at the next stage of its development. Governors oversee the school's action plans and ensure that key areas of its work, such as safeguarding, are given as a lead responsibility to one person. This ensures good levels of accountability.

Much has changed quickly. The school now has a team that can make the remaining improvements in a timely manner. You are highly ambitious for the school and wish it to become more than just a good school. You are realistic about the size of the task but optimistic about how efficiently and quickly you can make this happen. All stakeholders share this optimism.

External support

The Buckinghamshire Learning Trust (BLT) has provided effective support for the school during the period of instability. Senior officers from the BLT have provided direct leadership support to help you with action planning so that your activities are focused and productive. BLT officers have also provided specific support to the mathematics and science departments so that teaching is improving over time. As part of its wider remit, BLT consultants have also provided expertise to those working with pupils eligible for the pupil premium. This is beginning to close the gaps between their performance and others, in partnership with the highly committed staff in school. The BLT's chief monitoring officer is confident now in the school's leadership and has a clear understanding of what the school needs to do next to improve. He is brokering support for you as it is required. The BLT intends to continue its programme of support even if the school becomes an academy and operates outside local authority control.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Buckinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector