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Mrs Jane Green
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Green

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Longridge High School

Following my visit to your school on 7 July 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that strategies to improve attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils are having a positive impact on closing the gap between the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and their peers
- improve boys' attainment and progress in English so that they match those of the girls.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a national leader of education who is supporting the school and members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Telephone discussions were held with a representative of the local authority and an external advisor to the school. The school improvement plans were evaluated and external reports were scrutinised. A meeting was also held with a group of pupils.

Main findings

Leaders and managers understand and have accepted the findings of the section 5 inspection and have worked extremely hard to address the areas for improvement identified in the report. Improvement planning is clear, detailed and focused on appropriate actions, including the setting up of an effective teaching and learning group. This has resulted in improvements to senior and middle leadership, governance, teaching, learning, assessment and feedback.

The school has rightly prioritised enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that pupils are appropriately stretched and challenged, and that lessons are interesting and enjoyable. Teachers have engaged in an extensive programme of professional development that has focused on raising the expectations of all pupils. This has been enhanced by opportunities to visit, and be visited by, departments in other schools within the Preston Teaching Schools' Alliance where they can observe good and outstanding teaching, engage in team-teaching and share best practice. A feature of the improved teaching, learning and assessment has been the school's renewed focus on marking and feedback, which are now more consistently and robustly applied.

The pupils I met with were unanimous in their opinion that teaching and learning had improved greatly since the last inspection. They approve of the increase in challenge such as the difficult starter tasks they are given in mathematics and the focus on reinforcing knowledge and understanding from previous lessons in science. Pupils assert that classwork and homework are now more interesting and engaging and that the feedback in their books is 'more helpful because it shows you how to improve, rather than just saying "well done"'. They described how teachers motivated them to work harder by modelling how to undertake difficult tasks and by using resources such as 'visualisers' to show the class examples of pupils' good pieces of work.

The pupils were very keen to express their view that good relationships between staff and pupils are a great strength of the school. Comments such as, 'all staff are really supportive,' and, 'they always check if you are ok,' were typical of the comments made. Pupils value the rewards system and think that sanctions are applied fairly. However, they expressed a concern that some low-level disruption is not dealt with quickly enough.

Much has been done since the last inspection to develop the skills of senior and middle leaders. Senior leaders have undertaken training on effective teaching and

learning. As a result, they now have a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in each department and have taken supportive, yet robust, actions to secure improvements. A range of professional development training, combined with enhanced opportunities to carry out their role, has led to a striking transformation in the effectiveness of middle leaders who are now fully aware of their accountability for pupils' outcomes. The frequency and quality of departmental review meetings have been much enhanced and middle leaders value the opportunities they have to share best practice across subject departments.

Although the school has placed a great deal of focus on ensuring improved outcomes for the current Year 11, leaders are fully aware of the need to further develop programmes in key stage 3, and much is already underway. Improved resourcing, changes to transition arrangements and a more focused approach to tackling weaknesses in pupils' literacy are examples of changes that are taking place.

Action has been taken to address concerns raised at the previous inspection about inaccurate and over-generous assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. The marking of controlled assessments and mock examination papers is now internally scrutinised by senior leaders and externally checked by experienced subject leaders within the Preston Teaching Schools' Alliance. The school has also introduced more rigorous and frequent tracking processes that provide detailed and accessible information about pupils' progress. This has led to a range of targeted interventions to help accelerate progress and ensure that no pupil falls behind. The school's assessment of current pupils' achievement at key stage 4 indicates that all groups have improved their levels of attainment and progress. However, boys continue to achieve less well than girls in English and the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers remains too wide.

The school has recognised the need to improve the attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils. Much is being done in this regard. However, the impact is limited and the gap between the attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils and their peers has not narrowed.

Governors are highly motivated, skilled and visionary. They understand well what needs to be done to move the school forward. Their own post-inspection improvement plan has informed the actions they have taken to develop their role and enhance their ability to hold the school to account. This includes the introduction of the link governor role, which enables them to become more cognisant of the day-to-day work of departments and to challenge from an informed position. By inviting pupils to give evidence at pupil welfare committee meetings and by analysing the information from pupil surveys, governors ensure that they take pupils' views into account.

External support

The school has benefited from a range of advice and support from, among others,

the Preston Teaching Schools' Alliance and the local authority. This includes:

- training for senior and middle leaders
- whole school professional development
- joint observations and short visits to lessons to observe learning across the school
- external verification of teacher assessments
- bespoke teacher support from subject departments in partner schools
- visits by heads of departments to each other's schools
- governors' meeting with the chair of governors from the NLE school
- a visit and report from the local authority school advisor.

Evidence of the impact of this support is apparent in school information, which indicates improvements in pupils' progress and in teaching, learning and assessment.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

Her Majesty's Inspector