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Mrs J Brown
Principal
New College Leicester
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Dear Mrs Brown

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to New College Leicester

Following my visit to your school on 30 June 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.

Evidence

During the inspection I held meetings with the principal and associate principal, other senior leaders, middle leaders, pupils, members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority. During these meetings we discussed the actions that you and others have taken in order to improve the quality of the educational provision at the school and the difference that these have made. I toured the school and attended parts of nine lessons. I looked at pupils' work and considered your school improvement plan, your school self-evaluation and your data reflecting the current progress and attainment of your pupils.

Main findings

The leadership of the school is now good. Leaders are effectively driving improvements. Senior leaders and governors share an accurate understanding of how well the school is doing and what further needs to be done. Significant steps have been taken to ensure that leaders at all levels understand the improvements that they need to deliver. Care is taken to ensure that these leaders are in a position to do so. There is a strong sense of shared values and teamwork among leaders.

The school improvement plan carefully addresses those areas of the school where further work is needed and is structured with clear milestones and actions to be taken. The recommendations from the previous inspection are covered fully. The plan is reviewed and progress against it is monitored regularly.

Pupils are kept safe and properly supported when difficulties arise in their lives. This is overseen by a governor with knowledge of and passion for this area of the school's work. Staff are thoroughly trained to understand the different possible threats to pupils. The school keeps careful records and leaders promote an ethos where vigilance is the norm.

Senior leaders have articulated clear expectations of staff and have an appraisal system in place to hold individuals to account. A strong and appropriately focused drive has been made to raise the quality and consistency of teaching across the school as a whole. Leaders have developed an approach to evaluating the typicality of a teacher's work, which is serving them well both in supporting individual teachers on their improvement journey and in holding teachers and departments to account. This system is underpinned by a streamlined process to gather and distribute data that demonstrates the progress of pupils both as individuals, in groups and in different subjects. Teachers and their managers are rising to the challenge of being accountable for the progress of all their pupils. As a result, while more work needs to be done to consolidate the gains made, the quality of teaching is getting better and becoming more consistent.

Teachers are using feedback much more effectively to help pupils make the next steps in their learning and pupils can see the difference this makes as they respond to and learn from their teachers' comments on their work. Pupils appreciate the fact that their lessons have at least three levels of challenge in them; they say that this means that they are never bored by their work because there is always something new to learn. Teachers are planning better to meet the needs of their pupils and in some lessons this has led to the most able pupils tackling really demanding work with confidence.

In general there is a good level of support across all subjects for pupils to help them learn the basics of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Those pupils who are new to learning English are well supported in lessons through a range of different methods.

Pupils' behaviour continues to be good both in lessons and around the school. This is an inclusive school and relationships are positive and supportive. Pupils feel safe. Their exercise books show that pupils take pride in their work and maintain decent standards of presentation, even in subjects that have not yet fired their enthusiasm. Teachers and leaders rightly seek to raise aspirations of pupils and offer them a range of additional learning, cultural and sporting activities to help them widen their aspirations.

Governors are appropriately challenging to senior leaders and they are supportive too. They want their school to be as good as it can be and are not afraid to ask difficult questions. They hold the school to account by monitoring progress data and by talking to individuals around the school and watch closely in order to gauge what is going on. They have backed the principal to make some difficult decisions and to set out high expectations of all.

The progress that pupils are making, from low starting points, is still not as good as leaders would like, but it is improving particularly in humanities and in English and mathematics. The results gained by this year's Year 11 are set to be better than those gained last year and are set to improve further next year. New leaders in those subjects that were identified as particularly weak in the last report know what they have to do and have begun to go about doing it.

The school's website is clear and helpful in most respects but does not provide information about the values and ethos that the school promotes.

External support

There has been a lot to do to set the school on track to becoming good. The local authority has supported the school in this journey and has helped leaders identify a wide range of different external support from other local schools, from teaching schools and from external consultants. Regular meetings with representatives from the authority have ensured appropriate levels of support and challenge for senior leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Ing

Her Majesty's Inspector