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Mr Matthew Partington
Principal
Goole Academy
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Dear Mr Partington

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Goole Academy

Following my visit to your school on 14 September 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, governors and the trust 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:

- increase attainment and progress in mathematics
- ensure that consistently good teaching and accurate assessment secure good GCSE outcomes across all subjects and increased progress by disadvantaged pupils and the most able.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior and middle leaders, pupils, representatives of the governing body, a senior director and academy improvement partners from the sponsor, Wakefield City Academies Trust, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Action plans were evaluated. You and I undertook joint observations of English and mathematics lessons. I considered your analysis of the 2016 GCSE and post-16 results and of behaviour and attendance.

Context

Following a staff restructure, 45 support staff and five teachers left the school at the end of December 2015. Seven associate teachers were appointed from January 2016. A head of mathematics and second in charge started in September 2016, following a year when the head of department post was vacant. A new head of sixth form (Centenary College) started in January 2016. Since September 2015, Centenary College has only offered vocational courses. New school buildings opened in September 2016. You are leaving at the end of December 2016 to take up a new post.

Main findings

You have acted decisively to bring about changes in the school culture and to improve learning and behaviour. Your catch phrase, 'Whatever it takes', has been adopted by your senior and middle leaders and communicates your shared purpose and commitment to overcoming obstacles to pupils' learning. Pupils recognise and appreciate this change.

Your plans are focused accurately on the areas for improvement from the last inspection, with clear milestones and measures for reviewing and evaluating progress. Leaders are targeting their actions more precisely and energetically. Staff are better informed by more rigorous analysis of data and are subject to stronger systems of accountability. A sharper procedure has been introduced to get underachieving pupils back on their learning targets.

The governing body has a well-organised plan of challenge meetings and governor development. Governors have a good first-hand knowledge of the impact of actions taken to bring about improvement and have an accurate understanding of priorities for improvement.

Pupils, staff and governors agree that there has been a significant improvement in behaviour since the new behaviour policy was introduced in January 2016. Low-level disruption is identified earlier and sanctions are applied more quickly. Expectations are higher and relationships between staff and pupils are stronger. Pupils behave more sensibly around the site and in classes, the atmosphere is calmer and pupils interact and learn with much less disruption. Pupils value the higher level of supervision at breaktimes and the prompter action to nip misbehaviour in the bud. They praised the actions to deal with those that regularly caused trouble. Fixed-term exclusions are fewer but remain above average. The number of internal exclusions has reduced significantly. The level of behaviour incidents halved in the spring term but increased in the summer term as a result of supply teachers replacing staff who left and the attitudes of some disaffected pupils, principally in Year 11. Low-level disruption persists in a few classes. Leaders are confident that the number of behaviour incidents will reduce in the coming school year. Pupils really like the smart new uniform introduced this term and believe that this signals greater pride and aspiration by adults and pupils.

Attendance has been sustained at the national average through a constant drive to stress its importance to pupils and parents, including frequent home visits. Attendance by disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs remains a little below others. In the summer term, the rate of absence increased due to parents taking children on holiday in term time. The school is developing its work with the local authority to prosecute cases of persistent absence.

The school's actions had limited impact on the 2016 GCSE results. In 2016, Year 11 had higher starting points at the end of key stage 2 than in 2015. However, a lower percentage gained five good GCSEs, including in English and mathematics. Pupils from low starting points at key stage 2 achieved better GCSE results than in 2015. However, pupils from middle and higher starting points did not achieve as well as the previous year. Lower results are partly because of the underachievement of pupils who transferred from the Studio School, which closed, and of a group on a vocational pathway which was terminated. In both cases, pupils had made little progress in mathematics and this legacy affected the 2016 results.

Progress in GCSE English seems nearly as strong as in 2015, but progress in mathematics was much weaker, including for the most able. Pupils who have special educational needs made significantly less progress in mathematics than in English. Additional provision for literacy is helping weaker pupils in Years 7 and 8 to improve their reading, spelling and handwriting.

The prospects for 2017 are more promising, as the new Year 11 are further ahead in mathematics than last year. Mathematics has been taught for a year by a new team of subject specialists. New subject leaders have just been appointed. With effective support from the trust, the team is working more collaboratively and is improving learning in mathematics across the school. A consistent approach to planning lessons has strengthened teaching. Well-structured learning tasks set different levels of challenge. These help pupils to engage with the learning and enable those who can work faster to make more progress.

In a few subjects, results were lower than in 2015. In some cases, it was because pupils were entered for the exam before Year 11, and in others it was due to weakness in teaching and assessment. The school no longer enters pupils early for exams. Weaker teaching and assessment have been tackled robustly by teachers leaving and through professional development and coaching.

The proportion of disadvantaged pupils gaining five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, increased slightly in 2016 but remains too low. At GCSE, the difference in progress between disadvantaged pupils and others was wider in science than other subjects. Leaders have introduced a more systematic approach to checking the performance of disadvantaged pupils and targeting additional support. All teachers have a target to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. More frequent progress reviews identify shortcomings and actions to

overcome barriers to learning. Reviews of pupils' work have started to consider disadvantaged pupils more closely.

With one leader of special educational needs instead of two, and a reduced number of pupils on the register, the school has a sharper focus on the needs of individual pupils. Fewer, but more highly qualified associate teachers are providing more academic support. The performance of teaching assistants is being managed more formally. Leaders are improving the meetings with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and their parents to better plan and review the impact of support. The transition for pupils who have special educational needs to post-16 destinations is better organised. These improvements are at a relatively early stage of implementation.

Leaders have taken effective action to improve 16 to 19 provision. In 2016, attainment rose. Students taking the last set of academic courses in 2016 did better than in 2015. Students made better progress on the four vocational pathways which now make up the sixth-form offer. Increased teaching time led to a marked increase in those gaining at least a grade C in GCSE resits in English and mathematics. Students are better supported and guided by staff and have better access to computers for independent study. Work experience is better planned. Staff are more rigorous in ensuring that courses match students' needs and choices. As a result, retention rates have improved. In 2016, a higher percentage went to university and almost all moved to their destination of choice.

External support

You and your senior and middle leaders are making effective use of the trust's support and monitoring. Trust subject specialists are playing an important role in improving the mathematics curriculum and the professional development of staff. English teachers are beginning to contribute to professional development in other academies. The trust is helping to improve behaviour management and the provision for special educational needs. The trust is launching a promising new system for assessing pupils and tracking their progress. The trust is taking active steps to recruit a new principal.

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

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector