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31 October 2016

Mrs L Quinn  
Acting Headteacher  
High Well School  
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West Yorkshire  
WF8 2DD

Dear Mrs Quinn

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to High Well School**

Following my visit to your school on 11–12 October 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 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:

- strengthen work to improve attendance by ensuring that pupils' targets are reviewed more swiftly, and strategies implemented quickly to ensure that pupils sustain and increasingly meet high expectations
- make sure that governors have the information they need to hold leaders accountable for the school's work and to inform the evaluation and impact of school policies and plans
- swiftly implement an external review of governance in order to develop this aspect of leadership and management.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the executive headteacher, pupils, the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The visit focused on the actions taken to improve behaviour and attendance. The school's policies, planning, monitoring and evaluation data and information relating to pupils' safety and well-being were evaluated. Visits to lessons and a tour of the school were also undertaken.

## **Main findings**

The general picture of attendance is improving, especially from pupils' starting points on entry to the school, and particularly for Years 7, 8 and 11. However, across the school, particularly in Years 9 and 10, a significant number of pupils have frequent absences. Current monitoring and reporting to governors about attendance mask the fact that, for many pupils, improvements in their attendance are not sustained over a term and they slip back. This does not enable leaders and governors to make decisions and prioritise actions to tackle this issue. Absence rates remain well above national levels and this remains the biggest barrier to pupils' learning and achievement.

Pupils are responding to the changes you have introduced to increase the time for literacy and numeracy and to expand the range of subjects and examination options. Pupils say lessons are more interesting and their books and displays of their work demonstrate that they are becoming more engaged in learning. Some pupils are demonstrating pride in their work and are responding to the feedback they receive from teachers.

You have strengthened policy and practice around the way behaviour is managed in the school. Behaviour around the school is calm, particularly on arrival, and also at break and lunchtime. Relationships between staff and pupils are constructive and trusting. Pupils feel safe and many confide in staff and discuss things that concern them. Teachers and other adults are drawing upon their recent training to ensure greater consistency in the way they speak to pupils. Staff are making better use of strategies to calm pupils and prevent situations from getting out of hand. Pupils are motivated by the rewards system, but are less clear about their responsibilities in relation to the school's sanctions, and many flout the rules to not use derogatory language.

Incidents of poor behaviour are reducing and pupils are making positive choices to stay in classrooms. School policy is much clearer regarding the use of internal seclusion and the 'chill-out' rooms, with the latter now only used when a pupil is in crisis. However, the frequency of physical restraint is increasing, especially for a small number of pupils with severe behaviour and mental health needs who have to be restrained several times before alternatives are considered. Your decision to increase the number of therapies and external support from health professionals, as

well as better direction of this work, is helping individual pupils to manage their emotions. However, it is clear from discussions that you have identified that the scale of this work is not yet meeting the demands for it. Actions to expand this aspect of provision in order to develop pupils' resilience and capacity to self-manage their emotions are not detailed in the school's plans.

Leaders and governors ensure that pupils are safe. Recruitment practices and child protection arrangements meet requirements.

Leaders' reports to governors, especially around attendance and behaviour, do not provide them with the level of information they need to check that school plans, policies and procedures are having the desired impact. Governors have been slow to hold leaders to account for this deficit. The chair of governors is keen to develop a more strategic approach to governors' work and is determined to bring this about.

The school is not complying with regulations for what they should publish about pupil premium funding, information about provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, key stage 4 pupils' results and information about governors. Consequently, it is not easy for parents to access this basic information about the school.

### **External support**

The local area is providing useful support for pupils' health, well-being and social care. School leaders are increasingly coordinating these services to ensure that pupils with complex needs are better supported and make progress in their learning. Informal links with special schools and training are being used well to drive improvements to teaching and the curriculum. Additional support in the form of an external review of governance is advised. It is recommended that this is done swiftly, in order to strengthen accountability and school evaluation, so that the school moves forward securely on its journey to good.

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**