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Mr Mark Phillips
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Phillips

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Deptford Green School

Following my visits to your school on 16 November and 1 December 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.

My initial visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in July 2014, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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.

Following my inspection visit to the school on 16 November 2016, Ofsted became aware of a serious behavioural incident outside of school time. This involved pupils from Deptford Green and a number of other schools in the New Cross area of Lewisham. I returned to the school on 1 December 2016 to gather additional inspection evidence. This additional visit focused on the behaviour of pupils and their understanding of how to stay safe, including from risks in their communities. I report my findings from the second visit at the end of this letter.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that pupils are consistently given the opportunity to explain their methods of calculation and are expected to overcome identified errors in their learning, particularly in mathematics and science
- ensure that all staff are aware of their ability to 'whistle blow' safeguarding concerns, for example to the NSPCC
- improve further pupils' behaviour so that the number of fixed-term exclusions is significantly reduced
- introduce rapidly the school's planned developments to the curriculum, so that pupils systematically learn how to stay safe in their communities and beyond.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a range of heads of department and years, groups of Year 7 and Year 10 pupils and three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's post-Ofsted action plan was evaluated. With you and a deputy headteacher, I visited a range of classes across the mathematics, science and English departments. The focus of these visits was exploring the progress being made to improve the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and the behaviour of pupils.

Context

Since the previous inspection in May 2016, five teachers have left the school. Five teachers have replaced them. Leaders have abolished the school's house system. Internally, a head of year has been appointed for each year group. A new behaviour policy was launched in September 2016.

Main findings

In partnership with your senior leadership team, you have wasted no time in beginning to address the key issues identified at the previous inspection. You have galvanised staff and they are fully behind your vision of securing a good and then outstanding school. Staff are proud of the developments achieved so far, but they understand what is still required to secure improvements for all pupils.

The school's GCSE examination results have been published since the previous inspection. While validated assessment information is not available, you have carefully analysed the emerging strengths and weaknesses. You and your staff are rightly proud of the improvements evident in pupils' attainment and progress this year. However, you have astutely identified the need to reduce further gaps in progress, particularly for White British and Black Caribbean pupils. Equally, you

rightly wish to ensure that over time the school secures high-quality teaching without the need to offer as many interventions at the end of key stage 4 to achieve positive examination results.

You have ensured that staff have access to all assessment information about pupils. Staff are delighted that they can easily see information about individual pupils' attendance, behaviour and achievement. They are now making use of this information to plan more sharply for the pupils in their classes. Though this process is at an early stage of implementation, it is helping to tailor planning for teaching and interventions. Staff are clear about their personal responsibility for the assessment of all pupils in their care. Teachers are demonstrating an increasing ability to problem-solve where pupils have identified barriers in their learning. There are clearer lines of accountability now in place. This is ensuring different layers of leadership and staff hold each other to account for improving pupils' progress and behaviour.

You have adapted the school day to allow staff development time every Wednesday. Staff told me of their pride in having high-quality weekly professional development. Tightly focused professional development sessions focus on the school's priorities and the individual training needs of your staff. Consequently, the post-Ofsted action plan is progressing quickly.

Focused improvement planning ensures that everyone is aware of their part in improving the school's effectiveness. The plan details clear milestones for success. Middle leaders are increasingly effective in taking responsibility for driving improvements. They now feel trusted and empowered to take responsibility for their areas of work. Middle leaders are making use of the professional development time for planning improvements for departments and cross-subject groups, as, for example, in humanities. You and your senior team are modelling effective practice in checking the work of teachers and driving change. This is helping middle leaders to develop their skills further while completing nationally recognised training, such as the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leaders (NPQML). They are increasingly having an impact on pupils' progress through their work in year groups and departments. Middle and senior leaders are now working together to improve the work of the school.

The previous inspection found that checks on the suitability of staff were not as robust as they should be. You and your governing body rapidly responded to this finding. You have established a new system for checking staff prior to their appointment. The five new staff appointed since the previous inspection have had all the necessary checks made. However, you need to ensure that staff are consistently aware of their ability to refer concerns through 'whistle blowing' to an external agency, for example to the NSPCC.

The governing body has a clear plan to improve further its own effectiveness. Governors have worked hard to ensure they have a sharper focus on pupils'

outcomes and on checking the progress of the school's post-Ofsted action plan. For example, committee meetings now take place after collation of the school's termly assessment information. This ensures that governors can regularly respond to and challenge school leaders about pupils' progress. Governors now have clearer roles and links with departments and year groups. As a result, more focused monitoring is ensuring that governors have the information to challenge the assertions made by leaders. The governing body has considered what they want to gain from an external review of governance. Before proceeding, they have considered practice at another school to ensure that the review is likely to be effective, serve their needs and deliver change. The review is taking place early in December 2016.

External support

You have forged links with Woolwich Polytechnic and Chestnut Grove, both outstanding secondary schools. These links enable staff to observe and learn from outstanding practice in other settings similar to Deptford Green school. You have begun to develop joint professional development sessions with Addey and Stanhope, a local good school. During the inspection, I observed part of a twilight session for staff. This allowed staff from both schools an opportunity to work together, develop their practice in assessment, and share resources and ideas for planning.

The local authority is fulfilling its statutory functions. Each half term the local authority formally monitors Deptford Green's progress towards becoming a good school. Local authority officers have offered some support in mathematics. However, you are also being highly proactive in seeking to track down and learn from examples of strong practice within and beyond the local authority. You are strategically making links to help drive specific aspects of the school's development.

Visit to gather additional evidence regarding behaviour, welfare and safety

You and your leadership team have forged a strong partnership with the Metropolitan Police's local safer schools team. Pupils understand the role of the police. The local safer schools officer visits the school regularly and works with you to effectively share information relevant to your pupils. In conjunction with the local police, you provide pupils with a range of workshops, for example a drama workshop about staying safe from gangs. You respond quickly to emerging issues regarding pupils' safety, for example by providing an assembly for pupils immediately after a pupil had their mobile phone stolen while walking to school. When you identify potential risks to pupils, you work well with a range of agencies, including the police, social services and the local authority to reduce potential harm to pupils.

Pupils have a basic understanding of a range of safeguarding issues, such as knife crime and online safety. Pupils currently explore these issues in their form groups,

assemblies and off timetable days, which you call 'drop down days'. You accept that the school needs to develop further its personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme because pupils do not consider personal safety issues in sufficient depth or with sufficient frequency. You have already planned to introduce explicit PSHE lessons into the curriculum in September 2017. However, given the range of risks pupils encounter beyond school, this is not rapid enough to ensure that pupils have a growing understanding of how to stay safe in their community.

You and your leaders launched the new behaviour policy in September 2016. Pupils and staff understand this policy. Records and the views of parents, pupils and staff show the policy to be consistently applied across the year groups and departments. The new head of year roles have been instrumental in developing an overview of behavioural issues as they arise and planning improvements in the personal development, behaviour and welfare of individual pupils.

The new 'in-class isolation', a table where pupils consider their own behaviour while continuing to learn, has helped to reduce low-level disruption. However, too many incidents still occur where pupils are required to isolate themselves and reflect on their behaviour. You agree that instances of isolation and low-level disruption must reduce significantly.

The new behaviour policy is helping to identify instances of poor behaviour and conduct. Since September 2016, you have ensured that staff systematically monitor pupils around the school building during break, lunch and between classes. Consequently, behaviour in and around the school site is improving. Counselling is provided for those pupils who demonstrate more challenging behaviour.

Your senior leadership team has used fixed-term exclusions to establish and reinforce the school's expectations for behaviour; consequently, the number of fixed-term exclusions is high.

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

Yours sincerely

David Storrie

Her Majesty's Inspector