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Mr Phil Pearson
Associate Headteacher
Newsome High School and Sports College
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Dear Mr Pearson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Newsome High School and Sports College

Following my visit to your school on 8 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.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 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 April 2016, 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- Build on the pupil premium review by ensuring that the spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is targeted, appropriate, analysed and evaluated so that leaders are aware of the impact on pupils' progress.
- Further develop the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that all pupils, particularly those who are the most able, those who are disadvantaged and boys, are stretched and challenged.

- Continue to develop the skills of the governing body through appropriate training so that governors are able to offer high challenge and support to the school and can accurately evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the national leader of education and the national leader of governance who are supporting the school, representatives from the local authority and other senior leaders and middle leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I accompanied an assistant headteacher on a series of short lesson observations and I conducted a behaviour walk. I met informally with pupils and I scrutinised pupils' work. I evaluated school improvement plans and documents such as minutes of meetings of the governing body and pupil progress information. I checked the single central record and staff recruitment files.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has retired and you have been appointed to the role of associate headteacher. A national leader of education and a national leader of governance have been commissioned by the local authority to support the senior leadership team and governing body to drive forward rapid school improvement. Two members of staff have joined the science department and an attendance officer has been employed. Four middle leaders have taken up additional responsibilities as associate leaders. There is a new chair of the governing body, a new vice-chair and two additional governors have joined the governing body. An external review of governance and an external review of pupil premium spending have taken place.

Main findings

Following the previous inspection, action plans were developed and these are being effectively implemented to secure progress against the identified areas for improvement. These plans are regularly updated and actions and next steps refined to ensure that pupil outcomes improve. Four middle leaders have taken up promoted posts as associate leaders, which has strengthened senior leadership capacity and is ensuring that key areas such as provision for the most able and the promotion of literacy across subjects is rapidly addressed.

An external review of pupil premium spending has been carried out and identified many areas for improvement. The school has now appointed a leader to drive forward improvements for disadvantaged pupils. Working alongside the external reviewer, staff have been made aware of the weaknesses and action planning is underway to ensure the additional funds are well spent, using proven strategies and ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with others nationally.

Attendance is improving because leaders have taken immediate action to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent. This has resulted in an improvement in attendance in the last academic year, and attendance so far is on track to be above the national average. The new attendance officer is ensuring that action is taken when attendance becomes a concern, for example by swiftly involving parents/carers when a pupil's attendance falls below 97%.

School leaders are overhauling data systems in the school. You recognise that systems used previously have not given accurate data, which has led to an overestimation of how well pupils are doing. The new system ensures that progress is measured accurately from starting points and the effective tracking allows early intervention to take place. School progress information is becoming more accurate. Current data shows stronger progress for Year 11 pupils. It is improving in accuracy because teachers are using regular, robust assessment to check pupils' learning. Year 11 pupils are on track to make better progress than previous Year 11 pupils.

The review of governance has led to rapid changes within the governing body. Governors are working alongside a national leader of governance to develop their skills in governance. Following a skills audit, all governors now have a role within their area of expertise and the governing body has been strengthened by appointing a governor with significant secondary education experience. Governors now have links with the senior and associate leaders and are holding them to account. Accountability meetings have taken place for attendance and finance, which are supporting the school in making changes to improve in these areas.

Pupils are taking more pride in their work and better progress in books is evident. Pupils know what is expected of them in lessons and they are working with their teachers to improve their work. Teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils have higher expectations of themselves.

Leaders have acted swiftly to improve the curriculum. Pupils who need it now have more time in English and mathematics and, by restructuring the timetable, they are taught by subject specialists and so are making better progress in these subjects. The curriculum has been restructured to ensure that all pupils can access courses which are appropriate to them.

Leaders have improved the use of performance management so that all teachers have targets to improve. Through careful target setting, teachers are held to account for ensuring that they teach to the gaps in pupils' learning so that pupils have a solid foundation upon which to build their knowledge and understanding. Evidence of this teaching and the impact of this work are seen in 'best work' books and revision books, which pupils have across the curriculum.

Following the previous inspection and poor exam performance in 2016, middle leaders have worked alongside middle leaders from The Mirfield Free Grammar & Sixth Form Multi-Academy Trust. This has enabled them to reflect on their practice

and adopt examples of best practice to improve pupils' progress and attainment in their subjects. For example, they use GCSE exam questions regularly to prepare pupils for examinations and devise strategies for supporting disadvantaged pupils. Middle leaders are now closely monitoring the progress of all pupils and holding accountability meetings with teachers. This has raised the profile of making sure that no pupil is left behind.

External support

The school is effectively using external support brokered by the local authority to drive forward school improvement. The executive principal from The Mirfield Free Grammar & Sixth Form Multi-Academy Trust, a national leader of education, is providing direct support and challenge for leadership at all levels. This is enhancing the operational leadership and strategic capacity of the senior leaders. The national leader of governance is working closely with the governing body to model good practice and rapidly develop skills in governance. School leaders have acted upon the findings from his review and are in the early stages of seeing improvements through greater challenge in governor meetings. An external review of the pupil premium has been carried out and an action plan is being developed to ensure effective spending of pupil premium funds.

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

Yours sincerely

Debbie Redshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector