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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Anna Rooney
Associate Principal
De Warenne Academy
Gardens Lane
Conisbrough
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN12 3JY

Dear Ms Rooney

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to De Warenne Academy

Following my visit to your school on 19 January 2017, 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 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:

- improve attendance, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- improve pupils' outcomes in science
- include numerical success criteria and milestones in plans to help leaders monitor the impact of actions taken to improve the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, a group of Year 11 pupils, members of the education advisory board and representatives of the sponsor to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans and other documents provided by the school were evaluated. You and I conducted brief visits to lessons.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been changes to the leadership of the school and the trust. The trust has a new chief executive and has been rebranded the Delta Academies Trust. In January 2016, an executive principal started work in the school and the principal left in April 2016. You became the associate principal in September 2016. The leadership team and the teaching staff team have been restructured. A restructuring of non-teaching staff is underway.

Governance of the school is the responsibility of the executive board of the trust. The education advisory board (EAB) works closely with the school and its community. There is a new chair of the EAB.

Main findings

You have shared your drive and vision with staff and pupils. As a result, higher expectations pervade the school. Your positive impact is recognised by staff, the trust and members of the EAB. Staff feel well supported by school leaders and there is a positive ethos in the school. Your plans for improvement identify appropriate actions to move the school forward. However, the plans do not include numerical success criteria by which leaders can measure the impact of actions taken to address the areas for improvement.

Extensive professional development opportunities, allied to a new 'teacher toolkit', are leading to significant improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. Learning is better planned to meet the needs of learners and to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. However, there is still some inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Teachers whose practice is not yet good are provided with support and challenge from middle leaders and have opportunities to observe good practice and attend courses. As a result of this support and challenge, teaching, learning and assessment continue to improve. Work is underway to improve the quality of the challenge for the most able pupils and the engagement of boys. It is too soon to see the impact of this.

Middle leadership, including leadership in the sixth form, has improved. Subject leaders have been trained to monitor and evaluate teaching, learning and assessment in their departments. Some subject leaders have opportunities to drive whole-school change. You hold middle leaders to account for outcomes in their

areas and the middle leaders, in turn, hold teachers to account for the progress of the pupils they teach. As a result, accountability at all levels has improved and pupils' outcomes are rising. The impact of effective coaching by middle leaders can be seen in the improvements in the quality of teaching.

Regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress at key stage 4 and key stage 5 mean that pupils who need extra help are quickly identified. Year 11 pupils feel that the extra work they are doing in English and mathematics is impacting positively on their learning. Outcomes at key stages 4 and 5 improved in 2016. However, there is still too much variability between subjects at key stage 4. Current progress information, supported by a more appropriate curriculum, suggests outcomes for the current Year 11 will be better than those in 2016, although the data shows that outcomes in science continue to be a concern. Leaders focus appropriately on the outcomes of the disadvantaged pupils in the school, although a pupil premium review has not been completed. The progress of disadvantaged pupils in 2016 was well below other pupils nationally. The school's own progress information suggests that the difference between the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and others is reducing. Similarly, differences in the outcomes between boys and girls are decreasing.

Pupils and staff agree that behaviour has improved. Pupils are ready to learn and learning is not interrupted. Consequently, attitudes to learning have improved. Attendance has declined and is below the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. It is too soon to see the impact of the newly appointed education welfare officer and the work of the local authority support that you have purchased. The work with pupils on attendance and the rewards for good attendance are at an early stage.

The education advisory board work closely with the school and the community. The chair of the board has had a significant positive impact on the relationship between the school and the local community throughout a time of change. The board members have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. As a result, they are able to ask challenging questions about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.

External support

The trust offers effective support and holds leaders to account robustly for the outcomes of pupils. Support from subject directors impacts positively on the quality of teaching and the progress of the pupils the directors teach. Twenty members of staff are taking advantage of leadership training provided by the trust. As a result, the staff are developing their understanding of what it is to be a good leader. The trust provides valuable human resources and finance advice to school leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane
Her Majesty's Inspector