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Mark Watts
Head of School
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Dear Mr Watts

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Nottingham University Samworth Academy

Following my visit to your school on 1 March 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 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 and the additional priorities identified at the previous monitoring inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- develop the strategies that leaders have already put into place to enable a greater proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities from across all years to:
 - attend the school more regularly
 - make the progress that they should in their learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, in your role as the head of school; other senior leaders; subject leaders; the leader responsible for literacy; and the leader who is responsible for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I also met with the chair of governors and a member of the trust that the school will be joining shortly. I visited seven lessons, including in English, mathematics and science. I undertook these visits to lessons with you, the head of school. During these visits, I spoke with pupils and looked at their books. I evaluated the school's improvement plan and analysed the school's latest achievement data. I also looked at the school's evaluation of its use of additional government funding, including the pupil premium and the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding. I checked the school's safeguarding procedures, including looking at the school's single central register and recruitment procedures.

Context

The school is in the final stages of joining the NOVA Education Trust.

Main findings

You, your senior leaders and subject leaders have taken swift and decisive action to resolve those issues that I identified as requiring attention at the last monitoring inspection. Leaders at all levels now have a sharp understanding of the quality of the school's provision. You and your leaders are taking effective action to improve standards where they are not yet good, both in relation to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. As a result, greater proportions of pupils from across all years are now making at least the progress they should across a range of subjects, including in mathematics and science.

The leader who has responsibility for whole-school literacy has been quick to ensure that all leaders and teachers have a precise view of pupils' reading abilities. She has introduced a range of strategies to enable pupils to catch up where they have previously fallen behind in their literacy skills, including their reading and spoken language skills. She has designed these strategies to ensure that they meet the individual needs of the pupils, while also securing their understanding of subject-specific language. This support has enabled many pupils to make the necessary rapid progress in their reading skills to be able to engage well with their learning, and to respond effectively to the questions they encounter in written examinations.

Subject leaders now use the school's system for checking pupils' achievement well to ensure that greater proportions of pupils make more rapid progress. Subject leaders work closely with teachers to review pupils' achievement, and to evaluate the impact of the support that teachers provide individual pupils. As a result, subject leaders have a more precise understanding of pupils' achievement within their subject area. They are able to ensure that pupils receive the support they require to

enable them to make at least the progress they should. Through working more closely together and with the senior leaders, subject leaders ensure that they quickly identify pupils who are underperforming across a range of subjects and put in place appropriate support. Subject leaders also ensure that teachers share best practice across the different subject areas. The quality of teaching has improved since the last monitoring inspection because of subject leaders' more effective use of the school's systems to check on pupils' progress.

You have ensured that members of the governing body have a more precise understanding of the impact of leaders' actions to improve the quality of the school's provision. You have ensured that there are designated governors who check on pupils' achievement in key stages 3 and 4. These governors undertake their own visits to school to check the accuracy of the information that you and your senior leaders provide them. During these visits, they meet with subject leaders, visit lessons, and talk to pupils. They regularly report their findings to the governing body. You have also ensured that governors have received training to secure their understanding of different aspects of the school's provision, including pupils' achievement. As a result, governors have a much more precise understanding of the school's strengths and its areas for further development. They are now much more effective in providing you and your senior leaders with support and challenge in your drive to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

You have rightly recognised that the attendance and achievement of the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is too low. Your leader who has responsibility for the provision for these pupils has acted promptly to resolve these issues. For example, she has ensured that the adults who work with these pupils receive precise training to ensure that the support they provide is effective. You have also ensured that pastoral leaders work more closely with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure that they attend school more regularly. There are early indications that these pupils' attendance is now improving. However, it is too early to measure the impact of your work on improving these pupils' achievement. You recognise this, and are committed to continuing your work to improve these pupils' attendance and achievement.

External support

You and your leaders continue to work closely with local schools to secure improvements in the quality of teaching and in pupils' achievement. Your mathematics and science leaders, for example, receive effective support from external advisers in their drive to improve pupils' progress in these subjects. You also engage effectively with local schools to ensure that the curriculum is appropriate for your pupils, and that teachers' assessment of pupils' achievement is accurate. Your subject leaders and your teachers benefit greatly from the opportunities that this external support provides them to share best practice with colleagues from other schools. You also engage well with the multi-academy trust to validate your own evaluation of the quality of your schools' provision.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hollingsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector