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Mr D Bruton
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bruton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chace Community School

Following my visit to your school on 20 April 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 May 2016. 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 recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to ensure that:

- all teachers consistently challenge the most able pupils in their learning and give them activities that more typically suit their skills and abilities
- leaders at all levels are more thorough in their evaluation of the impact of pupil premium funding, including the impact that strategies are having on improving the progress being made by disadvantaged pupils from their different starting points.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, the national leader of education supporting the school and a range of pupils to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and a sample of subject improvement plans. I reviewed the school's current assessment information, including for key stage 3. I also looked at learning in mathematics and science and I met with a group of most-able pupils to discuss their learning and to look at their work. I reviewed a variety of documentation, including local authority evaluation reports, minutes of the rapid recovery group, the school's record of equalities incidents, bullying records and a range of documents that relate to safeguarding. I also reviewed the school's website.

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have restructured the senior leadership team. This includes three of the assistant headteachers who now have the role of 'raising standards leaders', one for each of the key stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. You have appointed new subject specialists to the science team, with most of these appointments starting in January 2017. A new and additional deputy headteacher started working at the school in April 2017, two days before this monitoring inspection.

Main findings

After the previous inspection, a 'rapid recovery group' was created to oversee the school's improvement. This group comprises you, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and another headteacher, who is a national leader of education. The work of this group has established an appropriate action plan to hold leaders to account for the impact of their work. Leaders did not waste time in putting into place appropriate actions to address the areas for improvement. This included supporting and developing middle leaders. Leaders at all levels are rightly focusing on improving 'quality first' teaching, rather than relying on intervention strategies to secure improvement.

Aspirational targets for pupils' achievement are ensuring that expectations are high, including for managing the performance of leaders and teachers. Targets are routinely used to track pupils' progress and for leaders to decide on any further actions that are needed. However, you agreed with me that, particularly at subject level, action plans must also include more specific and measurable targets for different groups of pupils, such as boys and the most able.

There has been a strengthening in how leaders monitor and review the quality of teaching and learning. This has enabled leaders to ensure that professional development for teachers and leaders is better matched to their individual strengths

and weaknesses. Middle leaders share best practice, work together well and are increasingly holding their teams to account for the quality of teaching, including when there is a need to have more difficult conversations. They can outline the impact that improvement strategies are having on the quality of teaching in their subject areas. However, you are aware that there are still inconsistencies across the school and within subject areas. You recognise that these inconsistencies over time mean that teaching, learning and assessment require improvement in some subjects.

You were rightly disappointed in the 2016 outcomes. They were typically well below predictions in most subjects, particularly in mathematics. You have taken swift action to increase the rigour and accuracy of the monitoring of pupils' progress. Leaders now routinely check teachers' assessments through lesson observations, looking at pupils' work and reviewing the half-termly assessments used in subject areas. You have also worked with other schools and used local authority external support to help check for accuracy, particularly in mathematics.

Leaders have put in place a plan for pupil premium expenditure and have reflected on the outcomes from last year and made some changes. This is having an impact in diminishing differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in mathematics and English. However, you agree that leaders at all levels are not rigorously evaluating the impact of current pupil premium expenditure. Leaders are not looking carefully enough at how the range of strategies being used are improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils from their different starting points.

Learning walks and reviewing of the quality of work in pupils' books during the inspection, particularly in mathematics and science, showed that teaching is improving. Teachers are becoming more consistent in having higher expectations of what pupils should be learning and what they are capable of achieving. They are generally aware of the profiles of their classes and use these profiles to target questions and provide support to different pupils. Pupils are taking more responsibility for their work and are showing better engagement with their learning, including boys. Teachers are becoming more consistent in following the school's feedback policy. However, some teachers are not consistently checking that pupils have fully understood their work before they move on to new learning activities. As a result, some pupils lack confidence and enthusiasm in the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding.

The school's assessment information is showing improvement in the progress being made by pupils across the school, including in mathematics and for boys. Progress is improving more rapidly in key stage 3 and Year 10 than it is in Year 11. Leaders and governors are aware that the progress being made by the most able, particularly in English, mathematics and science, is not good.

Leaders have launched some recent initiatives to improve the curriculum for most-able pupils, including the programme you are calling 'Chace University'. This is your

in-school project that includes offering enrichment sessions such as: 'decoding Russian', 'visual illusions' and 'social justice'. One pupil told me that the sessions 'help us think outside the box' and another pupil told me that 'it gives insights into other subjects'. Pupils also benefit from being inspired by visiting universities. However, during their everyday learning, most-able pupils are not being stretched enough. Pupils say that work is not typically challenging and that some of their learning time is not being used effectively. You agreed that improving outcomes for the most able is a priority for the school.

Pupils who spoke to me during the inspection, formally and informally, felt safe in school and report that bullying is rare. Pupils spoke about and gave me examples of how bullying is dealt with effectively by the school. Leaders carefully record, monitor and respond to any equality incidents, including homophobic or racist comments. Examples where leaders have responded include providing learning activities for pupils on the impact of sexist or homophobic language. Pupils typically behave well, both inside and outside the classroom. The school conducted a broad survey of parents in December 2016. Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their children were safe in school and that leaders deal with bullying effectively.

External support

The local authority has supported the school effectively since the previous inspection. Support has included consultancy in mathematics and a large team of external consultants has undertaken three reviews of the school since the previous inspection. A national leader of education is providing specific challenge through the work of the rapid recovery group and ongoing support for senior leaders. All of the support has combined to secure improvements in teaching and in helping middle leaders to become more effective in their roles. The support is helping to ensure that changes being made are long term and not just focused on 'quick wins'. Leaders are not over reliant on the support and it is being targeted specifically.

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

Yours sincerely

Sam Hainey
Her Majesty's Inspector