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Dear Mrs Sanchez

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Martin High School Anstey

Following my visit to your school on 27 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 November 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 November 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:

- Refine strategies already in place to improve the quality of teaching by:
 - embedding the whole-school approach to planning to meet the needs of all pupils
 - ensuring that teachers' assessments are accurate
 - ensuring that all teachers provide challenging activities.

- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that strategies to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress are rigorously evaluated and adapted accordingly.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, and a representative of the governing body, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke with a group of pupils formally and with other pupils in their lessons. I made short visits to a number of lessons, accompanied by yourself and the deputy headteacher. I considered a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, monitoring the quality of teaching, and attendance. I also considered the school's self-evaluation and action plans. I looked at pupils' work in their lessons and in a sample of books from different subjects and year groups.

Context

Since the last inspection, five teaching staff have left the school. You have appointed a new head of mathematics who will be taking up post in the summer term 2017.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, you have taken swift and effective action to begin to bring about the required improvements to the school. You have shared a clear vision with staff and have communicated high expectations of staff performance. You are ably supported by the deputy headteacher in your drive for continued improvement. You have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have ensured that appropriate plans are in place to ensure that these are addressed with sustainable improvements. For example, you are clear in your commitment to ensure that staff of only the highest calibre are appointed and are not prepared to recruit staff who will not contribute to providing a good quality of education.

You have taken action to improve the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Following your appointment as headteacher in September 2015, you introduced a cycle of meetings where senior and middle leaders discuss pupils' progress. Following the inspection in November 2016, you have amended this process to ensure that subject leaders are held to greater account. This, in turn, has enabled subject leaders to hold teaching staff to account for the performance of pupils in their class. There are now higher expectations of pupils' progress and greater rigour in the evaluation of staff performance. Alongside this process, you have ensured that staff are fully supported to develop and improve their practice. For example, staff in need of support are enrolled on an improvement programme, involving a variety of coaching, evaluation and appraisal processes.

You have introduced planning documents which you call 'context for learning

sheets'. These sheets, completed by class teachers, document each pupil's profile and identify their specific strengths and learning needs. Teachers are expected to use these in their planning, for example to ensure that activities are appropriately challenging and that effective strategies are employed to support pupils' progress. When we visited lessons, these sheets were effectively used by teachers, for example in identifying pupils to respond to specific questions or strategies to support behaviour. Your recent monitoring indicates that the use of this strategy is improving across the school, but you are aware that it is not yet fully consistent. You have plans in place to address this.

You have supported teachers to develop activities which interest and engage pupils. The deputy headteacher has led staff training on planning tasks which motivate boys. Your evaluation of the quality of teaching suggests that boys are now more interested in their learning. When we visited lessons, we noted that all pupils were focused on their learning, enthusiastically participating in a variety of activities. Boys and girls report that they enjoy their lessons.

Pupils say the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. They report that behaviour in lessons has improved 'massively' and appreciate the fact that they can concentrate in class without distractions. Pupils say their teachers really want to help them and want them to do well. This sentiment is shared by pupils who have high aspirations. Pupils report that they find the practice of 'DIRT', a means of reviewing and improving their work, to be helpful. Pupils find this supports them in understanding what they have learned and helps them to identify the next steps in their learning.

The last inspection identified the need to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments. You have facilitated the means for teachers to moderate their assessments with colleagues from other schools, which has helped improve the accuracy of their assessments. Subject leaders have taken greater responsibility to ensure that assessments are accurate and are held to account for this. You are aware this is an ongoing process and are keen to develop this further.

Following the last inspection, you have made changes to the leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. With the special educational needs coordinator, you have reviewed the use of teaching assistants. You have allocated the majority of teaching assistants to a faculty area to enable them to specialise in particular subjects. Staff have a greater understanding of their role and pupils are now more effectively supported.

Following the recommendation of the previous inspection report, you commissioned an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding in February 2017. You have taken swift action to address the recommendations of this review. You have written a clear action plan and created a team of senior and middle leaders to take responsibility for realising its aims. The allocation of this funding is now more carefully accounted for and you have begun to track the impact of its

spending in greater detail. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils' progress was significantly below that of other pupils nationally. Your internal tracking information indicates that current disadvantaged pupils are making greater progress than in the past, but you are aware that this requires further and rapid improvement. This rightly remains a key priority.

The last inspection identified the need to improve the quality of information provided to parents. Much work has been undertaken to develop communication with parents and ensure that they know how they can best support their children's learning. For example, you have adapted the organisation of parents' evenings and increased the frequency with which you update parents on their children's progress. Feedback from parents suggests that they now have a greater understanding of what their children can do and how they can support the next steps in their learning.

The chair of the governing body was appointed in September 2016, having previously served on the governing body. Since the last inspection, she has shared high expectations of the governors' commitment and contributions to driving school improvement. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement. Governors are aware of their own strengths and have recently conducted a skills audit to identify areas in which they would benefit from further training. They are appropriately supportive and challenging and have the skills to hold leaders to account.

External support

You have been extremely proactive in seeking external support and have forged effective working relationships with a number of other schools. For example, middle leaders have worked with colleagues from other local schools to moderate pupils' work and improve the accuracy of assessment. Leaders and other staff benefit greatly from the opportunities you facilitate to share best practice, for example through shared training and network meetings. You have also brokered support from education experts to corroborate the school's self-evaluation and to help in identifying successful means for improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector