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Mr P Whittle
Principal
Langdon Academy
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Dear Mr Whittle

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Langdon Academy

Following my visit to your school on 9 June 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 December 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:

- continue to develop the skills and confidence of teachers in the primary phase, particularly in their teaching of phonics and reading at key stage 2
- ensure consistency in the quality of teaching, so that outcomes improve in the small number of underperforming subjects at key stage 4
- routinely analyse the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities from their different starting points, not just by overall progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the governing body and members of the Brampton Manor Trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The initial post-inspection school action plan and the updated operational plan were both evaluated. I reviewed the current assessment information of pupils' progress, including for phonics and for different groups of pupils. I also jointly observed the teaching of phonics in the early years and Year 1. I looked at teaching in literacy and mathematics in the primary phase and the teaching of lower ability pupils in the secondary phase. I reviewed a variety of documentation, including the external review of governance, governor training records, minutes of governing body meetings, records of governor visits and a range of documentation as to how the school presents and evaluates information, including attendance and exclusions for different groups of pupils.

Context

There have been no significant changes to staffing or leadership structures since the previous inspection.

Main findings

Leaders and governors did not waste any time in addressing the areas for improvement since the last inspection. An external review of governance was organised quickly and finalised by February 2017. A great deal of work has been undertaken to improve the quality of governance. A new chair of the governing body took up post in February 2017. There has been a wide range of external training for governors in key areas of their work including: challenge and support; understanding the primary and secondary curriculum; safeguarding; and the responsibilities of being a governor. New appointments to the governing body have brought much-needed skills and knowledge.

As a result of actions in relation to the external review, there has been a significant shift in the culture of governance. Governors now routinely and rigorously challenge leaders. The chair of governors has wasted no time in getting to know the school accurately. Minutes of governing body meetings and records of visits show strong challenge to leaders about the impact of their work, including how effectively they are addressing the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Reports to governors are sharp and detailed: for example, pupils' progress, attendance, rates of exclusion and safeguarding are analysed and commented upon in detail. There is no evidence of complacency.

The action plan to address the areas from the previous inspection is comprehensive and detailed. Leaders have also updated this to form an operational action plan which allows them to effectively track the impact and next steps for each of the identified areas for improvement.

Leaders acted quickly on the need to improve phonics teaching, including deciding to change the scheme that was being used. Through learning from visits to other schools, leaders have put in place a more structured and systematic approach to phonics teaching. Your assessment information shows that you are expecting improved outcomes from the Year 1 screening check this year. Teaching is monitored regularly. The learning walk that I did with the head of the primary phase observing phonics across the early years and Year 1 shows that the quality of teaching has improved quickly. Pupils have clear routines, and they use letters and the sounds they represent to help them break words down with more confidence. Pupils' writing skills are also quickly improving. However, we agreed that teachers are not yet fully confident in their teaching and assessment of phonics. They will benefit from the ongoing support and further training that are being provided.

The primary curriculum has improved. Leaders have put in place detailed curriculum plans for a wider range of subjects, including computer science, history, geography and science. Looking at pupils' project books and the 'expectations, pace, independence and challenge' (EPIC) books from classes shows that pupils are effectively learning a range of knowledge and skills. For example, Year 5 pupils have written about their exciting trip to Hadleigh Roundhouse, and Year 4 pupils have evaluated making pizzas and also engaged well on a project about anti-bullying.

At present, the oldest year group in the primary phase is in Year 5. Leaders know that there is still some inconsistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. I observed teaching in literacy and mathematics. Pupils are being well supported, for example in undertaking challenging problems and in developing their writing skills. However, there is still work to do to ensure that more pupils reach the expected standard and greater depth at key stage 2, particularly in reading.

The curriculum for lower ability pupils is improving. Additional work-related courses have been added and pupils are now being entered for more GCSE and work-related courses. Observations of learning for this group showed effective teaching. Pupils were writing with confidence and engaging well with their work in the English and geography sessions that I saw. The reading scheme being used is proving to be particularly effective in helping lower ability pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their reading skills. You acknowledge that there are some 'optional' subjects, for example, design and technology, popular with pupils in key stage 4, where rates of progress are not as strong as in other subjects.

Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving rapidly. There has been focused training for teachers on how they can meet some of the specific learning needs of the pupils in their classes. The way that information about teaching and learning strategies is shared with teachers has also been improved. Teaching assistants have benefited from training and are more routinely observed and monitored to check on the impact of their work. Leaders are analysing assessment information for pupils who have special educational needs

and/or disabilities. However, in their evaluation of provision, leaders acknowledge that this tends to be for overall progress rather than systematically analysing progress from pupils' different starting points.

The pupil premium report has been carefully re-drafted with, for example, more thought and detail given as to how the funding will be used, including improving attendance and literacy skills. Leaders' reports to the governors on the impact of pupil premium expenditure are now more rigorous. As a result, governors are now holding leaders to account for the impact of their spending decisions.

External support

As well as the external review of governance, leaders make effective use of additional support, including visits to other schools as well as the other school in the Brampton Manor Trust. The headteacher of a local outstanding school is now a governor and helps in monitoring and supporting the head of the primary phase.

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

Yours sincerely

Sam Hainey

Her Majesty's Inspector