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Mr Niall Hand  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Hand

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Prendergast Ladywell School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 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 November 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At the 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:

- embed strategies to ensure that teachers consistently and effectively plan lessons that improve pupils' outcomes across the curriculum
- improve the attendance of White British pupils, including those who are disadvantaged
- complete the restructuring of the governing body so that governors' scrutiny of leaders' work is highly focused and effective in supporting sustained improvements.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteachers of the primary and secondary phases, senior leaders, members of the governing body and the executive headteacher. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I had informal conversations with pupils throughout the inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and the external review of how the school uses pupil premium funding. I visited lessons in the early years, primary and secondary phases jointly with senior leaders. I scrutinised documentation, including the single central record of pre-employment checks made on staff; staff training and appraisal documentation; middle leaders' reports on pupils' performance; and assessment and attendance information.

## **Main findings**

Leaders have been effective in addressing the areas identified for improvement by being robust and accurate in their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body of this school is also the governing body for the other two schools within the Leathersellers' Federation of Schools. Governors have used feedback from a previous external review at another of the federation's schools to support their work with this school. The last inspection report noted that governors know the school well, and this is still the case. However, governors have not been able to scrutinise effectively all aspects of this school's work because their time is stretched too thinly between the schools. Governors' plans to change the way that they check leaders' work aim to allow them to challenge leaders more stringently. Governors have scheduled the recommended external review of governance for July 2017 as part of their plans to improve their role in school improvement.

The outcome of the last inspection was a disappointment to leaders, but one that they accepted and have used to drive improvements. Staff turnover has been very low and leaders have taken advantage of the stability that this has provided while introducing new strategies. In particular, consistency in staffing is supporting the improvement in the way teachers prepare for lessons and use the school's assessment system. This helps pupils make progress because the training for teachers is able to build upon established routines. The system of appraisal accurately monitors teachers' work and supports middle and senior leaders' planning and interventions. Effective external support provides the chance for teachers to check their work with peers from other schools.

Middle leaders are now a more effective part of the improvements being made, analysing the information generated by the assessment system to target interventions within departments and year groups. This has improved teachers' accountability for pupils' performance by improving the focus upon groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, the most able, pupils who speak English as an

additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Improvements in the information that teachers have available when planning are refining the tasks and activities in lessons. As a result, there is a better match with pupils' prior attainment and needs.

A significant amount of work has gone into developing pupils' expectations of their time in school. This includes strategies to improve pupils' attendance and develop the ways in which pupils contribute to improvements in their school. Absence is reducing because procedures introduced are effective and staff have more clearly defined roles within the school's pastoral team than was the case. Persistent absence is also declining across the school because of effective interventions and accurate information that staff use to decide appropriate actions. This includes effective collaboration with external agencies. While attendance overall has improved this year, White British and White British disadvantaged pupils' attendance continues to remain lower. Leaders accurately identify those groups' attendance as an area of focus, while sustaining the improvements made for other groups. Leaders are right to recognise that weak attendance by White British and disadvantaged pupils continues to create a barrier to learning.

Pupils' outcomes are improving, particularly in younger Years 1 and 2 and in Years 7 to 10. Current pupils' outcomes in Year 11 show some improvement compared to the 2016 GCSE outcomes, but leaders' evaluation of this improvement being too modest is accurate. In Years 7 to 10, improvements for disadvantaged pupils, the most able and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are stronger. Pupils' achievement in writing in the primary phase is weaker than in reading and mathematics, but leaders have taken effective steps to improve the situation. Leaders have begun to implement the recommendations from the recent external review of how the school uses pupil premium funding to develop disadvantaged pupils' academic and pastoral performance. Leaders are not complacent about the work that remains to secure stronger outcomes for all groups of pupils.

Pupils' reported to me that leaders now routinely seek their views about improving the school through the student council. Pupils were also able to reflect upon the work they have done to develop an understanding of fundamental British values and their personal development. Some told me that they would value further opportunities to discuss and debate topical issues, including radicalisation and extremism. The school's plans to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are embedding similar opportunities across the curriculum.

### **External support**

Leaders have taken on the feedback from the recent external review of the pupil premium, making quick improvements to existing systems and procedures. The school has received useful support from within and beyond the federation. This has been particularly useful in helping staff check the accuracy of their assessment. The

local authority's schools' partnership has been an effective source of support and challenge for middle leaders, particularly for the heads of mathematics, English and science, who have worked with staff from other local schools to refine the plans for their departments.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Tiplin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**