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Tracy Towler
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Dear Tracy Towler

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Westhaven School

Following my visit to your school on 10 July 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 for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- fully embed the newly established monitoring system so that the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve
- fully embed the newly established assessment system so that pupils' successes are quickly identified and supported and barriers overcome
- ensure that expectations continue to rise and that teachers provide pupils with sufficient challenge during lessons so that they are able to reach even higher standards.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, pupils, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Together with the deputy headteacher, we made short visits to lessons. I scrutinised some examples of pupils' work with the subject leaders for English and mathematics. I met with a group of parents. I reviewed the school's monitoring documentation and the school's information about the progress pupils are making.

Main findings

Following the inspection, you and your leadership team have grasped the areas for improvement and are successfully driving the school forward. You have developed the skills of your leadership team and you trust and empower team members to lead their areas of responsibility. Working with your leadership team and governors, you ensure that pupils' needs are at the heart of the changes made.

The parents and pupils that I spoke to confirmed the positive impact that your actions are having on tackling the school's weaknesses. Despite this period of rapid change, you have maintained the high staff morale noted during the previous inspection. Strong, supportive relationships remain across the school. There is a calm, positive and inclusive learning environment. You ensure that pupils have the continuing support they need to behave well and to control their emotions.

The culture of safeguarding is strong. Staff know pupils very well and there is a high level of vigilance around the school for all safeguarding matters. Pupils who require extra support from adults, in order to ensure that they and those around them are safe, receive that extra support. Staff have had a high level of professional development to ensure that they have the skills and confidence needed to maintain safety at all times.

Your school improvement plan is thorough, with clear timescales, and it focuses on the right areas for improvement. You have been unafraid to tackle some difficult decisions as you work to build a stronger school. You and your team now have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. You have introduced more rigour to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment improve. These aspects are continuing to improve as subject leaders become even more involved with supporting their colleagues and with checking the impact this makes on outcomes for pupils.

You have worked to improve the accuracy and reliability of the assessments that teachers make. You and your leadership team have provided teachers with clear guidance about how to assess what pupils know, understand and can do. This is helping them to plan lessons that more accurately meet pupils' learning needs. We

agreed, however, that expectations could be even higher, with more challenge provided for pupils. Pupils themselves confirm that sometimes learning is still not sufficiently stretching or that it occasionally repeats work they have already covered.

There has been a clear focus on ensuring that assessment information gathered from across the school is used more effectively to check that pupils are achieving as well as they can. As well as improving the systems for checking the progress pupils make in their learning, you have also introduced clearer systems to check pupils' social, emotional and behavioural attitudes. As a result, staff have a far better understanding of what works and what is not as successful in supporting pupils' personal development.

Outcomes for pupils are steadily improving due to the improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. Due to improved collection of pupil progress information, you and your leadership team are increasingly able to precisely analyse and describe these improvements. We agreed that further challenge during lessons would help outcomes to improve even more, particularly for the most able pupils.

The systems for gathering information on pupils' achievement and personal development are now in place. You are aware that these systems need further development to ensure that leaders use them well to analyse progress. The systems should be used consistently over time across the school so that they become embedded into everyday practice.

Governors now play a strategic role within school. Following a review of governance and consequent extra training, governors have a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities and they ensure that, between them, they have the skills needed to provide rigour and challenge to leaders. Governors can now use the detailed information they receive from school leaders to ask challenging questions about the progress pupils make. They also make frequent visits to school in order to check the progress being made against the priorities outlined in the school's improvement plan. They could be better informed about how additional funding makes a difference to outcomes for pupils.

External support

The support provided by the local authority has made a significant contribution to the successful improvements made since the previous inspection. A local authority adviser has visited frequently and has been particularly helpful and effective in providing support and challenge to the leadership team. The impact of this support has been that leaders have remained focused on the areas for improvement and that the systems now in place are secure and robust. Leaders are now ready for this support to be reduced.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for North Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson
Her Majesty's Inspector