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Mr Morgan Thomas
Principal
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Dear Mr Thomas

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Littlehampton Academy

Following my visit to your school on 13 November 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 March 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- increase the consistency with which the new behaviour policy is implemented so that it supports pupils' learning in all lessons
- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all groups of pupils make good progress across the curriculum
- develop middle leaders so that they become more strategic in their contribution to school improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the principal, members of the leadership team, members of the academy council (governing body) and representatives of the Woodard Academies Trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was held with the chair of the academy council. I also met with middle leaders and pupils. I visited a number of classrooms and looked at pupils' books, activities which were undertaken together with senior leaders. I also looked at a range of documentation, including your action plans and evaluations of the school's work.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, there have been changes to the leadership and governance of the school. You have been appointed as principal on a substantive basis and have restructured the senior and middle leadership teams. You have appointed three new assistant principals to work as directors of learning, roles created following that inspection. You have changed the structure of middle leadership and there are now directors of faculty, supported by deputies, roles that are new. There have been changes to staffing, with 31 teachers leaving and 20 joining the school.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you have continued to improve the school. Following the inspection, you worked with members of the trust to evaluate and reshape leadership throughout the school. From this, you have established clear lines of accountability across the school so that every member of staff is aware of the role they have to play in improving life chances for your pupils. The members of your new middle leadership team are rapidly developing their skills. You are aware that they need support to embed their learning so that they can make a greater contribution to school improvement.

You have produced a detailed and accurate self-evaluation from which you have developed your school improvement plan. You have ensured that all leadership actions are linked to school improvement, addressing one of your carefully chosen key areas. Your detailed and well-measured plans show clearly what differences each action will make. Staff share your high aspirations and expectations and are enthused by the journey of improvement you are leading.

You have worked hard to make the school a calm and well-ordered environment. Following the findings of the previous inspection, you and your team undertook a complete review of behaviour and established clear and structured procedures to support pupils' behaviour and learning. During my visits to lessons and while looking at pupils' behaviour around the school, I saw pupils behaving well. They were following instructions and proud of their learning. The school's monitoring

information shows that behaviour has greatly improved in and out of lessons. Parents who completed the online Parent View questionnaire are in agreement, with 80% saying that the school makes sure that its pupils are well behaved. This is an increase on the 66% who felt the same at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils who have been at the school since that time told me that the changes were 'really good' and had made a real difference. However, they, and you, are clear that there is still work to do in order to embed these changes so that behaviour is supported consistently well across the school. Pupils, quite rightly, want the system to be applied fairly and told me that it is not yet consistently followed in all lessons. This variability weakens the overall impact of the system.

You are very clear that, in order to improve outcomes for all pupils, you have to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school, not just the subject areas named in the previous inspection report. To this end, you have provided high-quality professional development for all teachers. This has helped to raise aspirations among teachers and middle leaders and secure a common framework for what is expected in teachers' planning and practice. You have put in place clear lines of support and monitoring so that all teachers are helped to increase their effectiveness. Monitoring of teaching and learning is now swift and routine, with staff supported to improve. This work has been effective, as seen in pupils' improved attainment across the curriculum. However, you are aware that this is work in progress and that this professional development has to be continual.

As a consequence of this training and development, pupils are making better progress. Overall, pupils in key stage 3 are currently making good progress across much of the curriculum. The picture in key stage 4 is more varied because pupils have to catch up from the legacy of poor teaching. However, the picture is more positive than it has previously been.

The most able pupils are now making better progress than previously. Staff have higher expectations of pupils, possibly due to the many visits to primary schools that they have undertaken. These visits have helped to raise staff's awareness of what pupils have studied prior to secondary school and what they are able to do. As a consequence, staff now routinely challenge pupils in their learning, especially the most able, and pupils make more rapid progress. Pupils like being able to start tasks at different points of difficulty, depending on how well they have grasped the concepts studied. Pupils told me that many teachers are good at knowing what level of work they should be attempting and that they are usually challenged at 'just the right' level.

Your work to reshape the key stage 3 curriculum has also been valuable, and pupils enjoy the increased variety and challenge. For example, pupils told me that they enjoy cooking in their new 'healthy futures' lessons. They were keen to tell me about the importance of nutrition and exercise. As part of your new curriculum, pupils are supported to develop their oracy and extended-writing skills across the curriculum. This focus has helped to develop pupils' self-esteem, as well as their

academic abilities.

Your team has established a comprehensive system to track and monitor pupils' attainment and progress against targets. Leaders routinely evaluate pupils' targets and progress to make sure that pupils who might have underperformed in previous years are identified quickly and supported to perform more highly. Leaders have built strong moderation partnerships with local schools. This work is effective and ensures that assessment information is accurate. This allows governors to provide sharper challenge, and for leaders to ensure that timely interventions are put into place as required for pupils. It also allows you to hold leaders and teachers to account, providing them with support as necessary.

External support

The support from the Woodard Academies Trust has continued to improve. The trust has provided effective support for school leaders to make necessary changes to school leadership structures. Trust members helped leaders to evaluate and identify the changes required and supported them with personnel and employment processes. They have also provided training and moderation so that leaders have been able to assure themselves of the validity of teachers' assessments. In addition, they have helped to secure the resources in order to improve teaching and learning throughout the school.

External support from local school networks, especially leadership and moderation groups, has also been highly effective.

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

Yours sincerely

Lucy English
Her Majesty's Inspector