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Mrs Catherine Hughes
Loreto High School Chorlton
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Dear Mrs Hughes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Loreto High School Chorlton

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 September 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 a good school.

Leaders and governors should take further action to:

- improve the progress made by disadvantaged pupils across the school
- improve the quality of teaching further by ensuring that teachers plan lessons that promote consistently good learning and progress
- increase the level of challenge in lessons so that pupils are stretched to achieve their potential
- improve the quality and accuracy of pupils' written work, especially boys.

Evidence

During the inspection, the lead inspector held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, a national leader of education who is supporting the

school, and members of the governing body. This was to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority. Some senior and middle leaders accompanied the lead inspector on learning walks to review the quality of teaching. The lead inspector undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work during the learning walks and he also conducted a formal work scrutiny. During the inspection, the lead inspector considered a range of documentation relating to school improvement and he evaluated the school improvement plan.

Context

Since the previous inspection, an external consultant undertook a full review of the governing body. Leaders acted quickly on the findings of this review. To strengthen the work of the governing body, four additional governors were appointed with specific expertise in social care, sport and leisure, teaching and learning, and interpreting data and statistics. The governing body has also modified its committee structure so that it can be more effective and efficient.

In addition to the strengthening of governance, a local national leader of education continues to support and challenge senior and middle leaders to improve the school. Added to this, two middle leaders have joined the senior leadership team on a secondment to assist with improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and to strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have appointed new subject leaders in mathematics and physical education. In addition, all of the senior leadership team's roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and evaluated.

Main findings

Leaders and governors are determined that Loreto High School will provide the very best education for the school's pupils. They are open, honest and accurate in their evaluation of the current standard of education that the school provides. Leaders and governors are acutely aware of the key actions that they need to take in order to become a good school. They have undertaken a root and branch evaluation of the school's effectiveness. Leaders and governors have taken the necessary steps to overhaul the school's policies and procedures relating to teaching, learning and assessment. Most notably, they have ensured that robust quality assurance procedures are in place right across the school to hold leaders and teachers to account for pupils' learning and progress. Nevertheless, leaders and governors now need a period of time for their new systems and procedures to have the desired effect on pupils' outcomes.

Leaders and governors recognise that the school is on a journey of continual improvement. They are determined not to adopt any 'quick fixes'; they want to make sustainable changes that will improve the education that pupils receive. Leaders know that they have a challenging task ahead. This is because the new

leadership team needs further time to enable the revised curriculum model, emerging aspirational culture and newly introduced quality assurance processes to embed. However, these have not had sufficient time to have the desired effect on outcomes. For example, provisional outcomes for 2017 show that pupils did not make the progress across a range of subjects of which they are capable. This was particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and governors knew that this would be the case. Their own internal information about how well pupils were achieving highlighted some significant concerns. This was because a large proportion of pupils lacked the knowledge, skills and understanding to be successful in their GCSE examinations. They also lacked resilience. Despite leaders employing every strategy to fill the gaps in pupils' knowledge, the task was simply too great.

Current pupils, however, make much stronger progress across their subjects. This is because teachers are beginning to plan more effective lessons that enthuse pupils to learn. Teachers think more deeply about the activities that will engage pupils to make good progress. Nevertheless, some teachers still do not plan lessons that maximise pupils' learning and progress. For example, leaders accept that there are more opportunities for teachers to stretch and challenge pupils so that they make consistently good progress. This includes the most able pupils. In some lessons, for example mathematics and science, teachers do not challenge pupils consistently well. In mathematics, there are still more opportunities for pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills.

That said, leaders' and governors' plans to secure improvements for pupils are appropriate. For example, leaders and teachers recognise that historical outcomes for boys are weaker than for girls. Leaders and governors are taking effective action to improve outcomes for boys, but it is not yet consistently strong across the school. For example, some boys' written work is not at the standard leaders expect, and on occasions some boys do not complete their work to a good standard.

Another group of pupils who have not made consistently good progress is disadvantaged pupils. Leaders at all levels now have a sharp focus on diminishing the difference between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. They are committed to ensuring that funding is used effectively. In order to do this, leaders are undertaking a yearly review of the effect of pupil premium funding on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. Leaders are clear about the barriers to learning that face their disadvantaged pupils. They are determined to overcome those barriers so that all pupils have the appropriate skills to be successful in modern Britain. Current disadvantaged pupils' work clearly shows that they are catching up with their peers. However, there is a significant amount of work to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make sufficiently strong progress in their learning.

Another way that leaders have ensured that pupils' progress improves quickly is by undertaking a full review of what is taught across the curriculum. Leaders and governors have evaluated how effectively teachers use their time in lessons and

made appropriate changes to the curriculum where necessary. For example, pupils now have more lessons in mathematics so that pupils can consolidate their learning and progress. The number of qualifications that pupils take has also been rationalised. Middle leaders have reviewed schemes of work, and assessment systems are now much improved. There is strong collaborative work undertaken between middle leaders at Loreto High School and other middle leaders across the authority.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have also taken effective action to improve the quality of feedback that pupils receive. This is because leaders recognise the value and importance of regular feedback so that teachers can plan effectively for future learning and progress. Leaders also now ensure that teachers provide appropriate feedback to pupils so that pupils too know how well they are progressing in their learning. In many lessons, teachers use their questions increasingly well to ascertain whether pupils understand the key concepts that they are studying.

There is clear and compelling evidence that pupils are enjoying their learning and want to achieve well. Pupils' attendance has improved to above the national average and the attendance rates for disadvantaged pupils are very strong. This is because pupils recognise that the climate for learning across the school is improving. The proportion of pupils who engage in poor behaviour has decreased significantly. There are effective policies and procedures in place to ensure that pupils can stay focused in lessons and learn. As a result, most pupils engage well in lessons, are proud of their work and complete their homework to a good standard.

Leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' literacy since the previous inspection. For example, more and more pupils are developing a love of reading. This is clearly evident in the increase in the number of pupils who are borrowing books from the library. Pupils' work also shows that there is a consistent focus on developing their ability to use correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers are providing pupils with more frequent opportunities to develop their extended writing skills, although there is still some way to go to ensure that this is consistent across the school. Leaders have successfully focused on developing pupils' literacy so that they can access the curriculum more fully. As well as developing pupils' literacy skills, leaders and governors have appropriate plans in place to develop pupils' numeracy skills.

Middle leadership has strengthened significantly since the previous inspection. Senior leaders, including the national leader of education, are developing the required skills in middle leaders so that they can hold teachers to account for the standards that pupils achieve. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning for current pupils is improving. Right across the school there is a strong focus on making the necessary long-term changes so that pupils can make good progress. Staff embrace change and morale is high. Pupils appreciate the improvements that leaders have made. Leaders and staff are equally determined to improve the life chances of pupils.

In addition to strengthening middle leadership, governors have taken swift action to ensure that they provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders. Governors have an accurate understanding of the key areas of strength and areas for further improvement. They know what will make a difference to improving the learning and progress of pupils. They know that strengthening the quality of teaching is at the heart of their work. Governors ask searching questions of leaders and they undertake additional training so that they can fulfil their role with confidence. For example, governors effectively hold leaders to account for standards because they now have a secure understanding of the school's assessment information.

External support

Leaders and governors take every opportunity to broker external support. A national leader of education continues to work with senior and middle leaders. Governors have commissioned a full review of pupil premium funding. They have committed to undertaking an external review of pupil premium funding each year to ensure best value for money. Added to this, the local authority quality assurance reviewer has provided support to leaders. An external consultant has also worked with leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Smart
Her Majesty's Inspector