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Mr Michael Southworth
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Dear Mr Southworth

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cansfield High School

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- improve pupils' progress across the school by ensuring that teachers plan activities that challenge all pupils
- improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of middle leaders, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I undertook a learning walk and work scrutiny with the deputy headteacher. The school improvement plan and self-evaluation document were

evaluated. I scrutinised a range of documents relating to pupils' progress and attendance. You also made available the findings of the reviews of governance and of pupil premium spending that were recommended following the last inspection.

Context

There have been no significant changes in staffing to the school since the school was inspected in September 2016.

Main findings

You, your staff and governors have responded positively to the previous inspection judgements. You have done a sterling job in winning the hearts and minds of your staff team. Staff say that morale has improved and that they are well supported. You have raised expectations of staff and pupils. You have created an action plan that effectively focuses on the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. You provided me with clear evidence of the actions that leaders have taken and the positive impact that these have had on pupils' progress.

Following the previous inspection, leaders reviewed and refined the school's systems for assessing pupils' attainment and setting targets. Staff have been trained in the use of this new system, which has helped them to understand their role in raising expectations. Leaders regularly track pupils' progress against targets. This enables them to identify pupils who need extra support. Training has been given to teachers to help them to plan interesting learning activities which better match the needs of pupils. From my short visits to lessons, I saw how teachers used targeted questions to identify pupils' misconceptions and to deepen their learning.

Pupils I spoke to during the inspection were very positive about their school. They value the support they receive from staff and they enjoy their learning. Pupils commented on improvements since the last inspection, including the new approaches to assessing work, which they believe are helping them to make better progress. Individual targets are now clearly understood by pupils and are helping to raise their aspirations. The work in pupils' books shows that pupils are provided with opportunities to work on more demanding written tasks.

Leaders are committed to ensuring that pupil premium funding is used effectively. As a response to the pupil premium review, all teachers now consider disadvantaged pupils' needs specifically in their planning, and leaders check this. Pupil premium champions have been appointed for each year group. They focus on helping disadvantaged pupils to overcome their specific, individual barriers to success. These actions have begun to diminish the difference between disadvantaged pupils' progress and that of other pupils nationally with similar starting points.

The improvements in teaching are having a positive impact on pupils' progress

across the curriculum. Pupils made stronger progress in the 2017 external examinations compared to that of 2016. However, leaders acknowledge that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, the most able and boys, need to be challenged more to accelerate their progress further.

Leaders have introduced a more rigorous approach to absence follow-up procedures, to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. An attendance officer has recently been appointed. Leaders have introduced a range of rewards to encourage pupils to come to school. The impact of this is that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has risen. However, you recognise that the attendance of these pupils needs to improve further.

Governors are ambitious for the school and provide strong support for leaders. They accept that they did not challenge leaders enough in the past. The external review of governance has been carried out and governors have generated their own detailed action plan in response to this. A skills audit has been undertaken and this has led to two additional governors being appointed to broaden the skills and expertise of the governing body. Governors attend additional training as required so that they can fulfil their role with confidence. For example, they have improved their understanding of school performance data. Governors are now asking important questions of leaders about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement.

External support

The local authority consultant knows the school well and is providing leaders with effective support and challenge. He has also brokered links with the Rowan Learning Trust and the Shaw Trust. The support provided to date has contributed to improvements in teaching and leadership and has therefore been effective. Some teachers are markers, working with examination boards, and use their training to support internal moderation activities. As a result, the accuracy of teachers' assessments across a range of subjects is improving.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector