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Mrs Jill Atkins-Mackley
Interim Principal
Swallow Hill Community College
Whingate Road
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LS12 3DS

Dear Mrs Atkins-Mackley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Swallow Hill Community College

Following my visit to your school on 21 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 November 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders 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:

- ensure that action plans clearly identify who will check and who will evaluate the impact of actions
- ensure pupils take more responsibility for their own learning, developing more resilient attitudes to learning
- further develop teachers' questioning skills to stretch and challenge all pupils, encouraging them to think more deeply about their learning
- ensure all staff are clear about the individual barriers to learning for each

disadvantaged pupil.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and members of the senior and middle leadership team. I had a telephone conversation with the newly appointed chair of the governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with the chief executive officer and the director of support and challenge from the Academies Enterprise Trust. I met with the chief executive officer of the Rodillian Multi Academy Trust to discuss the impact of support received by the school. I examined a range of documents, including the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, governors' minutes, and exclusion and attendance records. I visited lessons with you and your assistant principal. I scrutinised a sample of pupils' work with the assistant principal responsible for teaching and learning. I talked to a group of Year 9 and 10 pupils.

Context

Since the previous inspection, staffing has become more stable. You have appointed an assistant principal to lead improvements in teaching and learning and two new teachers of English and mathematics. Additional capacity has been added to the leadership team with the support of two leaders from the Rodillian Multi Academy Trust. The governing body has very recently reformed to a management board, with members appointed by the Academies Enterprise Trust.

Main findings

Middle and senior leaders are sharper in their evaluation of the quality of provision. Middle leaders are more accountable. They present at governing body meetings and are now challenged by governors on the progress pupils make. There is a particular emphasis on actions taken to diminish differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and others at these meetings. Leaders recognise the journey of improvement. However, they are not complacent and know where the pace of improvement needs to accelerate. Senior and middle leaders' action plans now include interim milestones. Action plans shine a brighter light on improving outcomes for pupils and reducing further the variation in the quality of teaching and learning. However, action plans do not identify clearly who will check and who will evaluate the impact of actions.

The recent appointment of an assistant principal with responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning has led to a sharper focus on areas of need. Teachers now collaborate. They observe each other and share ideas. This is helping to spread good practice in teaching and learning. Pupils told me that they feel more challenged now in lessons and well supported by staff. Pupils are more willing to contribute to class discussions. However, leaders acknowledge that pupils need to

develop more resilient attitudes towards their learning. Although the way teachers question pupils has been a feature of recent training, leaders recognise the need to develop teachers' questioning further, so that pupils are routinely challenged to think more deeply about their learning.

In English lessons pupils are encouraged to redraft, refine and improve their work. This is helping them to fill gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills. There is less evidence of this in other subjects. As a result, a priority in the school improvement plan is to embed this practice in all subjects. Pupils take more pride in the presentation of their work and this is now more consistent across subjects.

Since the previous inspection, attendance has improved and persistent absence has reduced. However, attendance remains below the national average. Because teachers consistently apply the 'positive discipline' policy, behaviour has improved and exclusions have reduced. Pupils speak very positively about the improvements in behaviour. However, you acknowledge that reducing the number of exclusions remains a key priority. Leaders have stronger action plans in place to increase attendance and reduce exclusions and persistent absence further.

The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is still a priority in your improvement plan. You recently commissioned a pupil premium review. The resulting action plan identifies clear measures to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. However, you recognise the need to ensure all staff understand the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils, so that staff use this information to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils.

Target setting, and the tracking of pupils' progress, has been overhauled since the previous inspection. As a result, tracking is more robust and teachers and leaders are more able to check precisely the progress of groups of pupils, from their different starting points. In 2017, based on provisional outcomes, pupils did not make good progress in their GCSE subjects. However, current progress information shows that most-able pupils, and disadvantaged pupils, are making better progress than in the past across their subjects in Years 10 and 11.

The governing body has been replaced with a management board. Members of the management board have been appointed by the trust. As the management board has only recently been established it is too early to evaluate impact.

Since the previous inspection, the curriculum has been reviewed. This has led to an increase in most-able pupils studying triple science. Raised expectations of what pupils can achieve have led to a larger proportion of pupils studying a language and humanities subject at GCSE. As a result of the curriculum review, the curriculum is now more broad and balanced to meet the needs of pupils.

External support

The Academies Enterprise Trust has brokered support from the Rodillian Multi Academy Trust. The chief executive officer of the Rodillian Multi Academy Trust, together with some of his senior leaders, have worked closely with the school since the previous inspection. This support has had a positive impact. More robust pupil progress tracking systems enable leaders and staff to keep an eye on the progress of different groups of pupils. This has led to more timely interventions for those at risk of underachievement. Leaders from the Rodillian Multi Academy Trust have worked with leaders to embed the 'positive discipline' policy. As a result, behaviour has improved and there is a more positive climate for learning. The Academies Enterprise Trust has given the school some additional support in English and mathematics. Although outcomes for pupils remain too variable, leadership has been strengthened in these subjects and leaders have more effective plans in place to improve pupil progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello

Her Majesty's Inspector