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15 January 2018

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Dear Ms Webb

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to South Wigston High School

Following my visit to your school on 13 December 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 2017. 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.

The school should take further action to:

- continue to improve outcomes by ensuring that the progress of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve rapidly
- improve the evaluation of the impact of the pupil premium on pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance
- ensure senior leaders' roles and responsibilities are clear and manageable
- make sure all teachers use the school's behaviour system consistently well

- eradicate the inconsistencies in teaching quality, particularly in science, French, art and geography.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders. I spoke with the chair of the governing body by telephone. I also met with a representative of the Learning without Limits Academy Trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated a range of documents. I also looked at records of pupils' achievement, behaviour and safety. I met formally with a group of pupils from key stage 4.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, there have been significant changes to staffing. New curriculum leaders have been appointed to English, mathematics, humanities and modern foreign languages (MFL). An assistant curriculum leader in mathematics is new to this post. A special educational needs (SEN) coordinator has been appointed. The business manager is newly employed. Ten teachers have left the school. Ten teachers and one new member of the governing body have joined the school. Formal procedures are currently taking place for the school to join the Learning without Limits Academy Trust. At the time of this inspection, the due diligence process had recently been completed.

Main findings

Despite a period of turbulence, including in staffing, the quality of education provided by the school is improving. Since the previous inspection, you have worked with great determination and have strengthened systems of accountability. You have increased enormously the expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they should behave and conduct themselves. The members of the leadership team are carrying out their roles increasingly effectively. However, further clarity is required about aspects of some senior leaders' roles and responsibilities. This is because some members of the leadership team are in danger of having too many responsibilities and, as discussed, are 'being spread too thinly'.

The school's improvement plan identifies precisely what needs to improve. It details the actions that will be taken, when they will be implemented, who is responsible for ensuring that they have a positive impact and how success will be measured. You recognise that there is still much to achieve for the school to be judged to be good at its next section 5 inspection. You are cautiously pleased with the positive impact of the work undertaken and of the improving outcomes for pupils.

Results in the 2017 key stage 4 examinations show an improvement, particularly within English. However, outcomes in other curriculum areas were not as strong,

particularly in science, French, geography and art. Pupils' attainment and progress across a range of eight subjects studied was below the national average. Current information indicates that pupils now in Year 11 are progressing and attaining increasingly well, including in English and mathematics. Indeed, there is emerging good practice within English and evidence that pupils' progress is accelerating. You know, however, that further work is needed to bring achievement in science, art and French in line with other subjects.

At the time of the section 5 inspection, inspectors noted that disadvantaged pupils were not making enough progress. Current assessment information, based on increasingly robust assessment, shows that the achievement of this group of pupils is rising in some subject areas, but not all. The pupil premium strategy is comprehensive and this funding is allocated creatively to benefit pupils. However, the evaluation of the impact of these funds is not as stringent as is needed.

A vast range of specific and timetabled additional support is in place to support Year 11 pupils. The pupils I met with spoke very positively about the impact of this help, particularly the English sessions. Pupils said that these sessions 'really made them sweat!' Pupils were less complimentary about the more 'open' sessions. They said that at times this support did not meet their needs. The extensive support you put in place is addressing a legacy of underachievement, particularly of disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils. Although laudable, extensive support cannot replace high-quality teaching across all subject areas. You fully recognise this and are addressing the remaining weaknesses in teaching.

The school's records show that pupils' attendance is improving, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Much successful work happens at individual pupil level to ensure that pupils are in school and learning. Relationships with parents and the wider community have vastly improved. You recognise that a small number of disadvantaged pupils still do not attend school regularly enough and this remains a key focus. Nevertheless, pupils' improved attendance since the previous inspection is a significant success.

The newly implemented behaviour system is well understood by pupils and is having positive impact. The number of pupil exclusions has reduced. Pupils said that they appreciated this improvement and that their teachers were more consistent in the application of the behaviour policy. Weaker application of the behaviour policy tends to be in areas of weaker teaching and learning. Pupils also confirmed that their learning was now rarely interrupted by the poor behaviour of others in their class.

Pupils were keen to inform the inspector of their appreciation of the implementation of the school uniform. They said that initially wearing a new school uniform had been unpopular with some pupils but that now they 'liked feeling smart'. They said that the uniform 'ties us all together' as pupils of the same school. There is still work to be done to improve further the consistency in the implementation of the

behaviour policy. However, it is clear that the expectations of pupils' behaviour, conduct and dress have risen since the previous inspection and have had a positive impact

Governors have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They monitor closely the effectiveness of the school's improvement plan. Governors also check how well disadvantaged pupils are achieving. However, the effectiveness of this area of their work is hindered by insufficiently detailed reporting by school leaders on the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Governors are enthusiastic about the school joining the Learning without Limits Academy Trust and the additional capacity that this partnership will generate.

External support

You are keen to be outward facing and to learn from the expertise of the best schools and practitioners. Links with Caludon Castle School, part of the Castle Phoenix Teaching School Alliance, have proved effective, particularly in relation to middle leadership and the curriculum.

The leadership support provided by the chief executive of the Learning without Limits Academy Trust has been highly effective. The support from the trust is due to increase substantially. This is a welcomed decision by the trust and is valued by you and governors.

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

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman

Her Majesty's Inspector