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7 February 2018

Mr Lee Ratcliffe  
Headteacher  
Calderstones School  
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Merseyside  
L18 3HS

Dear Mr Ratcliffe

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Calderstones School**

Following my visit to your school on 24 January 2018, 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. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in November 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- ensure that pupils' learning in mathematics consistently improves
- embed the recent development of leadership at all levels throughout the school, including responding to the recent changes in staffing to fully establish the planned, revised senior leadership structure
- sharpen the precision of improvement plan targets, to make it easier to identify that the impact of planned actions is as great as possible.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with the following people to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection: you; other senior leaders; two groups of pupils; a group of middle leaders; sixth-form leaders; the chair and two other members of the governing body; a representative of the local authority and the school's improvement partner. I evaluated the school's improvement plan. I observed teaching, learning and behaviour in some mathematics and science lessons, and pupils' movement around school after their lunch break. I reviewed pupils' books in visits to classrooms and other books belonging to the pupils I met. I examined documents, including the school's information on pupils' progress, teaching and learning, and governance. I held a short discussion with leaders about the culture of safeguarding in the school.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, senior leadership roles have been adjusted to ensure that responsibility for important aspects of the school's work is clear. The expectations of middle leaders to make sure that work in their subject areas is effective have been increased. A new head of science has been appointed.

The reviews of the school's use of the pupil premium and of governance have been completed.

## **Main findings**

Leadership and management have improved since the previous inspection. The school has taken successful action in respect of each of the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. The breadth of the improvement already achieved indicates that leaders are changing the culture of the school and, in particular, raising the expectations of pupils and staff. The actions taken have been guided by the school's comprehensive improvement plan. This clearly sets out what is to be done and how leaders can check that this has happened. However, in some areas, the targets to be achieved are not specific enough to provide the greatest possible challenge.

The roles of senior leaders have been clarified and reorganised. This process is continuing, for example in response to a vacancy recently created within this team. The lines of accountability from senior leaders to subject leaders and then to teachers have been made clearer. Senior and middle leaders have implemented a systematic approach to ensuring that the quality of teachers' work in classrooms is as high as possible. This approach is also ensuring that pupils' learning is also more successful. The new system has given middle leaders more confidence in providing better support to colleagues and, where needed, a framework in which to discuss and challenge less effective practice.

The school's arrangements for checking the overall effectiveness of teachers have also been strengthened. Interim reviews between the annual assessments of teachers' performance are now being properly completed. Stronger links have been put in place between teachers' development needs and the training needed to address these. Leaders now approach these checks on performance and subsequent action as a process which should lead to improvement rather than an annual event to be completed and then, sometimes, forgotten until the next year.

The review of governance recommended by inspectors was completed by a national leader of governance. Governors have carefully considered the review's recommendations and are implementing these systematically. This includes, for example, governors planning better how to ensure that their governance remains effective over time and developing more direct contact with middle leaders. Governance is improving.

Teaching is improving. Leaders' expectations of teachers, and teachers' expectations of pupils, have risen. Teachers have clearer details about pupils' starting points and information about other factors which could affect their progress. Leaders identified that pupils' progress in English and science was not good enough soon after the previous inspection. Their concerted actions ensured that results in these subjects improved in 2017. However, Year 11 pupils' progress in mathematics in 2017 was disappointingly slow after relatively faster progress the year before. In addition, disadvantaged pupils continue to do less well compared to other pupils. Leaders are already working with other staff to improve pupils' success in these weaker areas.

Leaders have learned from the review of the school's use of the pupil premium. A senior leader now has specific responsibility for the success of disadvantaged pupils. There is a greater focus on making sure that these pupils do as well as possible. For example, each subject area now has a designated teacher who has the responsibility to support their colleagues' work with disadvantaged pupils. In addition, leaders are paying more attention to what pupils say about their learning and providing specific additional teaching for them.

Aspirations in the sixth form are high. The joint leadership arrangement between two leaders means that students' progress is carefully monitored and students receive tailor-made support. The school has close links with universities and appropriately encourages students to consider applying to those with higher entry requirements. Retention rates in the sixth form have recently increased. This reflects the additional care leaders are taking when pupils move from Year 11, for example in arranging to interview pupils after they have received their GCSE results. In 2017, A-level results improved. In particular, boys and disadvantaged students demonstrated that they had made rapid progress over Years 12 and 13.

Pupils in the school generally behave well. Leaders have made expectations

clearer by making sure that any instances of low-level poor behaviour are dealt with more systematically. Pupils feel that this helps them to behave better. The school's record for this year includes more behavioural incidents than in the past, but this reflects the better identification and follow-up to concerns which are now in place. Pupils' attendance is around the national average. However, the proportion of pupils with long-term absence has fallen over the last few years.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide effective support to the school, for example by jointly reviewing the work of different subject departments with leaders. This process has contributed to the development of leaders' skills and confidence. Leaders' willingness to use external support to help them improve the school is also illustrated by their positive and effective response to the findings of the reviews of governance and the use of the pupil premium.

When needed, leaders carefully engage with professional experts to seek advice and specific support on safeguarding and child protection matters. This adds to the strong culture of safeguarding in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

David Selby  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**