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Mr Garry Trott
Principal
Westbourne Academy
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Dear Mr Trott

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Westbourne Academy

Following my visit to your school on 14 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils, especially disadvantaged boys
- ensure that the recent improvements in leadership, teaching and progress in English are replicated in science
- accelerate the impact of the support being offered to those teachers who need to improve the quality of their teaching
- further improve the rigour of improvement planning to enable leaders, governors and trustees to evaluate the school's progress more effectively.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the acting chair of governors, a representative of the trust, leaders, staff and pupils to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also made visits to a number of lessons. I evaluated the school's improvement plan and I also reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document and minutes both from meetings of the governing body and the trust's progress board. I scrutinised records of the attendance and progress of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you have taken effective action to improve the overall quality of education for pupils who attend your school. You have added leadership capacity to the senior leadership team by introducing additional roles focused on key priorities. You have been able to make other important leadership appointments in a number of areas and you have also provided effective support for those leaders who were new in post at the time of the last inspection. As a consequence, leaders are having a positive impact on improving both the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Pupils and staff are positive about the changes to the school and the quality of education it provides. Staff welcome the high level of challenge that you give, but they acknowledge that this challenge is accompanied by support and a desire to work together for the benefit of your pupils.

Pupils' outcomes have improved significantly. In 2017, pupils' overall progress at the end of key stage 4 was in line with the national average. Pupils achieved, on average, half a grade higher across their best eight subjects than similar pupils did in 2016. The progress of pupils of all abilities has improved, but you were particularly effective in accelerating the progress of lower-attaining pupils. The progress of the most able pupils was identified at your previous inspection as an area for improvement, and the overall progress of this group of pupils has also improved considerably. Although you are pleased with the recent examination results, you acknowledge that there are areas, such as science, in which improvements are still not rapid enough. Your assessment records indicate that pupils currently in key stage 4 are also making better progress. You recognise, however, that progress is less consistent for pupils currently in key stage 3.

Leaders are accurate in their assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, and their records show that the overall quality of teaching is continuing to improve. Your priorities for staff training are tightly focused on the areas for improvement identified at your last inspection, and you provide both whole-staff and individual training in order to support teachers to improve their practice. Teachers are very positive about the support and training that they receive; they particularly welcome the opportunity to visit each other's lessons to share good practice. You evaluate the quality of teaching based on a wide range of evidence and you acknowledge that there are still a small number of teachers whose practice needs to improve more quickly.

Governors and the trust hold leaders to account through meetings of the local governing body and the trust's progress board. The progress board's agendas are tightly focused on appropriately identified priorities, and the meetings offer a high level of challenge. You are well supported by an experienced acting chair of governors. Your 'transformational improvement plan' clearly identifies the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and it outlines a wide range of actions to drive improvement. However, you, the acting chair of governors and the representative from the trust all agree that the plan is not clear enough about its expected outcomes. This makes it more difficult to offer leaders support and to hold them to account.

You have acted effectively to bring about improvements in the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Leaders have now embedded the strategies that were evident at the last inspection, and they continue to develop new and innovative ways to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a consequence, the progress of these pupils at the end of key stage 4 improved in 2017. Leaders' assessment records demonstrate that this improvement is also evident across key stages 3 and 4.

The previous inspection recommended an external review of your use of the pupil premium to assess how this could be improved. The review took place, but you acknowledge that its impact was limited in improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils. With the support of the trust, you have undertaken a second review and have made changes to the leadership of this area from September 2017. Although you have now reviewed and modified the use of the pupil premium, with an enhanced focus on disadvantaged boys, it is too early to see the impact of many of these actions. Your assessment records demonstrate some improvements in the progress of disadvantaged pupils in Year 11, but this is not reflected to the same degree in other year groups.

The impact of your work to improve leadership, teaching and progress in English and science has been mixed. Strong leadership, improvements in the quality of teaching and positive pupil attitudes to learning have resulted in a transformation of pupils' outcomes in English. Improvements in science are less evident. You agree that the quality of leadership and teaching in this area needs to improve rapidly so that pupils make more progress.

Your actions to improve the monitoring of pupils attending alternative provision have been effective. Responsibilities are now clear, and pupils' attendance and progress are tracked appropriately.

External support

You work closely with the trust. You are keen to take advantage of the trust's specialist support, and the school has benefited from this in areas such as provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, evaluations of the effectiveness of the spending of the pupil premium and 'challenge visits'. Support from the trust has

contributed to the school's improved 2017 outcomes and the broader improvements seen during this inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Gee
Her Majesty's Inspector