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Russell Stevens
John Hanson Community School
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Dear Mr Stevens

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to John Hanson Community School

Following my visit to your school on 26 March 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 June 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 June 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 good.

The school should take further action to:

- increase teachers' expectations so that the most able pupils are challenged to reach the highest standards across the curriculum
- accelerate the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in class so that they are supported to catch up, particularly in key stage 3
- ensure that school and departmental improvement plans contain measureable milestones by which leaders at all levels can be held accountable for improvements in their subject areas.

Evidence

During the inspection I met with you, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils from Years 8 and 10, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Leaders' self-evaluation of the school and improvement plans were scrutinised. Short visits were made to a selection of lessons in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and the humanities jointly with senior leaders. I reviewed a sample of books from pupils in both key stages.

Context

There have been a number of changes since the last inspection. You took up post as headteacher in June 2017. You wasted no time in restructuring your senior leadership team, reorganising roles and responsibilities and appointed your deputy headteacher in October 2017. In addition, there have been several changes at subject leadership level. Since the last inspection, a total of 18 teachers have left the school and 10 have been appointed. The governors have worked with the local authority to develop better communication and a greater depth of understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Consequently, they are better informed about the progress that the school is making and are offering more robust support and challenge to leaders.

Main findings

Following your appointment as headteacher, you have restructured your senior and subject leadership teams with a clear focus on making the necessary improvements identified during the last inspection. Leaders have implemented a raft of changes to improve the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of assessment across the school. You have acted decisively to restructure the leadership of humanities, implement staff training and recruit new staff where necessary. Middle leaders feel energised and enthused by the clearer structures and improved monitoring and planning systems in the school.

Working with local authority advisers and another local school, you have completely restructured your systems for self-evaluation and school improvement planning. Leaders and governors now have a much more cohesive system which links plans at all levels with the identification of training needs and setting of performance management targets. Introduced in September, your new system has enabled several changes and initiatives to be introduced into classrooms. For example, teachers are now better informed with progress information and resources to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. While leaders' actions are improving the school, some leaders and governors are still not clear as to which of these has the highest priority and how to check the effectiveness of their actions on pupils' outcomes. More work needs to be done to ensure that clear and measurable milestones are included to measure the progress

made towards achieving each of the key targets.

New school assessment and feedback systems have recently been introduced so that teachers are able to use progress information to inform their planning. There are some promising signs of improvements being made, particularly in English. Here, teachers' regular constructive feedback has clearly had a positive impact on the progress that pupils make. However, in mathematics, the quality of feedback given to pupils and its impact on their progress is variable. While verbal feedback is often strong and very useful, the use of the school's marking policy is not always timely enough to enable pupils to refine and improve their mathematical skills.

Across the wider curriculum, work in pupils' books shows that teachers need to set higher expectations for the presentation, depth of thinking and application of subject-specific vocabulary, particularly for the most able pupils. Some staffing turbulence means that it is too soon to see the impact of the new assessment and feedback systems on pupils' outcomes in some subject areas. More work needs to be done to embed these systems, particularly in modern foreign languages and the humanities.

As a result of a comprehensive package of training and support from other schools and the local authority, stronger teaching means that pupils are now making better progress in English and mathematics than they had done in the past. Examination skills are taught well and pupils are being better prepared for their GCSEs. Assessment information is being used well to design a range of bespoke interventions and catch-up sessions in key stage 4. Consequently, current progress information is predicting improved achievement for current Year 10 and Year 11 pupils across English, mathematics and the wider curriculum. Leaders' tracking information identifies that interventions have been successful in beginning to diminish the differences in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and their peers. In the past, leaders' predictions have been accurate.

In the lessons I visited with leaders, teachers have adopted your new assessment systems but there is some variability in how well they use them to refine their teaching to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Restructuring your SEN team, you have ensured that teachers are becoming better informed with bespoke information about the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. In-house progress information shows that this group is making stronger progress than in the past in both key stages 3 and 4. Leaders have implemented a variety of interventions to support disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4. However, although teachers are aware of who the disadvantaged pupils are in their groups, these pupils are not making strong enough progress in class. This is particularly the case in key stage 3. Teachers are not well enough equipped with progress information and strategies to enable them to make changes to their teaching to meet the needs of these pupils.

Governance is strong. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school

well. Acting decisively, they have worked with the local authority to restructure leadership and seek training to improve their own skills. Governors have a strong and determined drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They are ambitious for the school and offer challenge to leaders. Governors recognise the need to accelerate the pace of improvement through ensuring that leaders' improvement plans are sharper and include clear and measureable milestones.

External support

Leaders draw wisely on a wide range of support offered from the local authority consultants, other schools and their work with local partnerships. This has enabled improvements to middle leadership, teachers' subject and assessment knowledge, curriculum planning and the moderation of pupils' progress. The subject leaders that I met recognise the impact that this training has had on improving standards in their subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry

Her Majesty's Inspector