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Mr Neil Hooper
Interim Headteacher
Sanders School
Suttons Lane
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Essex
RM12 6RT

Dear Mr Hooper

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sanders School

Following my visit to your school on 18 April 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and the responsible authority 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and four members, including the chair, of the interim executive board (IEB) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans were evaluated. An opportunity to walk the school with your deputy headteacher enabled me to see pupils at work in lessons. I met with a group of Year 10 pupils to gain their views of the school. I also took the opportunity to observe pupils' conduct in the dining hall and outside at lunchtime. You shared a range of documents with me to show recent developments and the impact of the actions taken to improve the school.

Context

Following the last inspection, the school experienced a period of significant turbulence. In May 2017, the governing body was issued with a warning notice by

the local authority regarding concerns about overall standards, budgetary matters and the school's rate of improvement over time. An external review of governance was carried out during the summer term. The governing body was replaced by an IEB in November 2017.

The headteacher resigned in September 2017. At this stage, you took over the leadership of the school on an interim basis. A new substantive headteacher has been appointed to lead the school from September 2018. The IEB has informed parents and carers of the intention to join the Success for All Educational Trust (SFAET) in September 2018. The school roll is growing and an increased number of pupils will join the school in September 2018.

Main findings

Faced with these significant challenges, you have provided the school with much-needed stability and coherent leadership. Ably supported by your deputy headteacher, you have maintained a clear focus on ensuring that the school functions effectively on a daily basis and pupils remain safe. At the same time, you have evaluated accurately the school's effectiveness and put in place suitable plans to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection.

During this turbulent period, you have maintained morale and gained the full support of staff and pupils. The school is calm and purposeful. Pupils are respectful and most of them conduct themselves well. Pupils who met with me commented favourably on the improvements being made and on the quality of support and care provided for them.

Attendance is improving. Revised procedures to promote better attendance and reduce persistent absence are working. These include providing transport for identified pupils and working much more closely with the families of pupils who are frequently absent. Your latest monitoring information shows that, currently, overall attendance is higher than it was last year and is much closer to the national average. Routine monitoring also shows that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is rising.

Your deputy headteacher is overseeing improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Staff training and the raised expectations of them – defined in the school's 'Sanders Six' strategy – are leading to greater consistency in the planning and delivery of learning.

Routine monitoring and regular reviews of each faculty provide a clearer overview of where the strengths and weaknesses lie and what further training and support for staff are needed. You acknowledge that the actions taken to make teaching more consistent have, at times, been undermined by an over-reliance on temporary staff. Pupils who met with me felt that, in a small minority of subjects, staffing changes had adversely affected their learning and progress.

My observations, carried out jointly with your deputy headteacher, confirmed that, in general, expectations of pupils are higher. Relations between staff and pupils are good and pupils behave well. Some inconsistencies remain. For example, in some subjects, pupils are expected to present their work neatly, complete all tasks and respond to the comments made in teachers' marking. Elsewhere, marking does not follow the school's agreed procedures to encourage pupils to take more pride in their work.

Revised procedures for assessing pupils' progress are used systematically. They provide you with a more accurate overview of how well all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are doing. They also enable staff to target support towards those who need it most. Scrutinising this assessment information also enables you and the IEB to hold teachers accountable for the progress made by their pupils.

An external review of the use of the pupil premium has sharpened your spending plans to provide disadvantaged pupils with the teaching, support and care they need to succeed as well as others. One of your senior leaders has responsibility for monitoring the impact of this spending on the outcomes achieved by these pupils. Funding is used to promote better teaching for all and provide disadvantaged pupils with good-quality pastoral care and support matched to their individual needs. This is leading to improvement. Your most recent assessments, including the results of mock examinations for pupils in Year 11, confirm that, similar to other pupils, disadvantaged pupils are making improved progress and are expected to meet the targets set for them this year.

External support

A consultant, an experienced headteacher, an experienced primary school governor, a representative of a local multi-academy trust and the local authority operate effectively as an IEB. By appointing a new substantive headteacher and brokering arrangements to join a local academy trust, it has secured the next stage of the school's development. The IEB has also added impetus to the school's improvement by holding you and your staff far more accountable. You have welcomed assistance from experienced leaders in local schools and the executive headteacher of the SFAET to support you in your interim role.

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

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector