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Mrs Anne Gregory  
Headteacher  
The City of Leicester College  
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Leicester  
Leicestershire  
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Dear Mrs Gregory

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The City of Leicester College**

Following my visit to your school on 21 June 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 and governors 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:

- ensure that teachers plan activities which meet the needs of different groups of pupils
- further improve attendance and reduce persistence absence, particularly of disadvantaged pupils
- increase the precision of plans to use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other leaders, a group of staff, members of the governing body and the headteacher of a local school who is supporting leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also spoke by telephone with a local authority adviser. The deputy headteacher and I visited several classes and discussed the strengths and weaknesses observed. I met with a group of pupils and spoke to pupils in their lessons to evaluate the quality of their learning. I also looked at a sample of pupils' workbooks and looked at their work in lessons. I read a variety of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and action plan, information about pupils' progress and attainment and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance. I also scrutinised the school's checks on staff's suitability to work with children. I checked the school website to ensure it met statutory requirements.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, 11 teaching staff have left the school. Twenty-three teachers have joined the school.

Sixteen teachers are due to leave this summer, including one of the deputy headteachers, the head of the sixth form and two middle leaders in the science and expressive arts departments.

Fourteen new teachers have been appointed, including a deputy headteacher, a head of the sixth form and directors of mathematics and science. They will take up their posts in August. The school is fully staffed for next term.

## **Main findings**

You are extremely committed to the school and have high aspirations for all pupils' success. Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement. You have shared your high expectations with staff, pupils and parents. Staff and governors understand the school's priorities and their role in bringing about the necessary improvements. Following the last inspection, you took swift action to restructure different leadership teams across the school. Roles and responsibilities are clear and understood by all. This has led to greater focus on the school's key priorities. You have amended the structure of leadership meetings and briefings. This has also enabled leaders to concentrate on their areas of responsibility, while ensuring that all are kept informed about developments across the school. There is a sense of purpose in all that you do. Leaders and staff have begun to address all the areas identified as needing improvement at the last inspection and many improvements are evident. You evaluate the impact of the school's work thoroughly and amend strategies accordingly. You are realistic about the work that still needs to be done to bring about further improvements and clear plans are in place to this effect.

The quality of governance has strengthened since the last inspection. Governors have received training from the headteacher of a local school which has helped them to understand their role, particularly their responsibility to hold leaders to account. A local authority adviser has worked with governors to develop their understanding of the quality of education provided by the school. Governors are now well informed and have the skills to question and challenge the information that leaders provide. They are now more effective in their roles. Governors have begun to monitor the school's use of the pupil premium funding but do not yet hold leaders to account for the additional funding to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Recent appointments to the governing body have increased the capacity for effective governance.

Through training and extensive moderation of pupils' work, leaders have ensured that assessment information is now more accurate. One of the assistant headteachers has undertaken considerable work to strengthen the school's assessment systems. She has trained staff to understand and interpret assessment data. Teachers are thus able to use this information to inform their planning and support pupils who are not making the progress they should. The increased rigour in this aspect of the school's work has led to greater accountability at all levels.

A key priority has been to improve the quality of teaching and considerable work has been undertaken. Leaders have provided staff training in the effective use of questioning and discussion and staff have benefited from a range of development opportunities, such as the teaching and learning conference and the 'lesson study programme', a series of workshops designed to support staff to develop their skills and expertise in weaker aspects of their practice. Staff say they are held to greater account. They feel challenged to improve their work but feel supported to do so.

Leaders have introduced a series of 'non-negotiables', a set of expectations of classroom routines. These cover a range of issues, including expectations of pupils' behaviour. They also include expectations of teachers' planning, for example the 'think now' activity which is used at the start of every lesson. Teachers ensure that these expectations are met consistently. Pupils say that the non-negotiables help them to learn.

Clear expectations of presentation have been shared with pupils. Work in pupils' books indicates that the vast majority of pupils have responded well and presentation has improved in all subjects, for all groups of pupils, including the least able and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, inconsistencies remain and some pupils, particularly the least able, do not always produce their best work.

Part of the work to raise expectations has been around increasing the level of challenge in lessons. Work in pupils' books shows that they are provided with challenging activities. During visits to lessons, we observed teachers using questioning well to challenge the most able. They were also supporting the least able during classwork. However, teachers do not routinely plan activities which

meet the needs of different groups of learners, so all pupils work on the same task, regardless of their ability. The last inspection identified the need to improve the quality of teaching in the science department, particularly. The improvements in teaching across the school are also evident in this department. Changes to leadership and a review of the curriculum have also contributed to improvements in this area.

You have introduced a number of strategies to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. These range from pastoral support to a whole-school approach to teaching, which is consistently applied by staff. Heads of year have been instrumental in supporting your aim to improve outcomes for this group of pupils. For example, they identify specific barriers to learning and liaise with pupils, staff and parents to help all involved overcome them. Every disadvantaged pupil is supported by an 'advocate', who liaises with teachers and parents to support pupils in all aspects of school life.

Following the last inspection, you sought external support to conduct an informal review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding. A further, formal review was carried out in February 2018. You have taken effective action to implement many of the recommendations of these reviews. You are beginning to evaluate the impact of the funding but recognise the need to closely align the plan's aims with pupils' outcomes. Current disadvantaged pupils are making more rapid progress than in the past. This aspect of the school's work remains a priority.

The leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved considerably since the last inspection. The special educational needs coordinator has a strategic approach, incorporating all aspects of pupils' education. She has provided training to help staff understand their responsibilities in meeting pupils' needs in the classroom. She evaluates the impact of support, monitors pupils' progress and liaises effectively with teaching and pastoral staff to help ensure that pupils get the support they need. Leaders do not yet report to governors about how the additional funding to support this group of pupils is used. Governors are therefore unable to hold leaders to account for its impact.

Leaders monitor pupils' attendance closely and act swiftly when they have concerns. For example, pastoral leaders contact parents when pupils are absent and you intervene directly when you have concerns about an individual pupil's attendance. All staff are expected to support the whole-school priority of improving attendance and are held to account for their part in this important aspect of the school's work. Attendance has improved, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. The rates of persistent absence of these groups of pupils have also declined; however, they remain above the national average. Improving attendance remains a priority.

## **External support**

The local authority has provided support through their 'single plan' which has helped leaders to focus on evaluating the impact of their work to bring about improvements. The local authority has commissioned effective support from the headteacher of a local school, which has had significant impact on improving the quality of leadership and management. Leaders are extremely positive about this support. It has contributed to the accuracy of leaders' self-evaluation and the means by which they have driven improvements.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Mosley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**