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Mr Jonathan Winch
Executive Principal
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Dear Mr Winch

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Trinity Academy

Following my visit to your school on 28 September 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 judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections. Its most recent section 5 inspection took place in September 2017.

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:

- ensure that arrangements to reduce absence and persistent absence for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, result in more rapid and marked improvement to pupils' attendance
- further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that progress improves, particularly in mathematics.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior and subject leaders, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust (the trust) and the chair of the governing body. I also met with a group of pupils to hear their views relating to the school's actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and evaluations of teaching were reviewed. I visited science and drama lessons jointly with the director of the teaching school where we observed pupils learning and evaluated work in pupils' books. I scrutinised a wide range of evidence including the school's self-evaluation, analysis of performance information, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding files, recruitment checks and minutes from governing body meetings. I considered the 78 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Context

Since the school was judged to require improvement in September 2017, the principal has left. The trust's chief executive officer, working in conjunction with the local governing body, appointed a new executive principal from the trust to lead the school in February 2018. Following this, a director of teaching school was seconded from the trust to support the development of teaching and an assistant vice-principal with responsibility for assessment was appointed. As part of a staffing restructure, two new posts were created internally with responsibility for the junior and senior year groups. In September, 10 members of staff left the school and seven started, including a new subject leader for technology.

Main findings

Improvements following the previous inspection were slow to gather pace initially. However, the actions of new leaders and governors are now accelerating improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in most subjects. Pupils told me that higher expectations and a continued emphasis on the school's seven core values provide them with increased academic challenge but also the determination to do better. However, leaders recognise that there is still much work to do to ensure that all pupils receive consistently effective teaching across all subjects.

The majority of teaching is characterised by excellent relationships with pupils, probing questioning that allows the teacher to swiftly assess pupils' understanding and strong subject knowledge. For example, in a Year 10 drama lesson, pupils were creating a montage using the song lyrics from 'I don't like Mondays' by The Boomtown Rats. The teacher's highly effective questioning enabled her to identify gaps in the pupils' understanding and suggest alternative ways of acting out emotion to the harrowing lyrics. Furthermore, leaders' targeted support and training for teachers are contributing to improving questioning and higher expectations in the classroom. Leaders' monitoring of teaching is regular and accurate. It informs

future and training programmes for staff, ensuring that staff who need support receive it in a timely manner. However, there are still some teachers who do not identify pupils' misconceptions via questioning or assessment. Consequently, pupils sometimes make the same mistakes on more than one occasion. Additionally, some teachers still do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. This leads to some pupils still making insufficient progress.

At the time of the inspection, the school had just received the provisional attainment and progress outcomes for the Year 11 cohort that left in 2018. This information highlighted that, although still below average, pupils' progress overall and from their different starting points was much improved when compared to Year 11 pupils who left in 2017. Disadvantaged pupils' progress in 2018 was also much improved but remains well below average. Notably, pupils' progress in mathematics declined. Pupils' progress in mathematics in 2018 was approximately half a grade below other pupils nationally.

Leaders, including governors, have a more accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Improvement plans are well-matched to the areas for improvement highlighted in the previous inspection report. Plans include relevant actions, clearly identify the persons responsible for leading the actions and are reviewed regularly. Consequently, leaders refine or amend plans accordingly when they do not see the improvements they expect. Governors are now more inquisitive. They frequently attend school to take part in meetings, listen to presentations from staff, evaluate the work of leaders and contribute to the strategic direction of the school. They are not afraid to make tough decisions for the benefit of the pupils. As one governor described, 'failing is not an option for us'.

Senior leaders have recently begun to have some success in improving the effectiveness of subject leadership. Leaders and staff from the trust provide subject leaders with tailored support and training that centres on the progress pupils make. Furthermore, staff are given the opportunity to visit other trust and local schools to work together and learn from their counterparts. The executive principal told me that subject leaders now have 'the tools to do their job to the best of their ability'. Indeed, inspection evidence demonstrates that systems to check the effectiveness of subject leadership are strong. Regular departmental reviews, progress meetings and clearer expectations from senior leaders are encouraging subject leaders to hold others to account and reflect on the quality of their own work more often. However, the quality of subject leadership remains inconsistent. As a result, the quality of teaching has not improved in some subject areas, such as mathematics and science, at the same rate as others.

Senior leaders do not shy away from evaluating the effectiveness of their own work. For example, they arranged an external review of pupil premium spending and swiftly acted on the recommendations in the report. Furthermore, following a restructure of the senior leadership team, leaders sought to develop their own skills, knowledge and understanding by attending training concerned with effective

teamwork. Although some senior leaders are new to their role or the school, they have a clear vision and are highly regarded by staff.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that all pupils and students in the sixth form have access to appropriate risk education, particularly including education about extremism and radicalisation. Leaders check pupils' understanding in this area regularly by conducting questionnaires or holding pupil discussions. This informs teachers' planning. Pupils participate in 'tolerance weeks', which include activities linked to radicalisation and how pupils can identify potential risks. The pupils and sixth-form students I talked to have a detailed understanding of how they can identify risks and report concerns to teachers or other agencies.

Leaders were also asked to improve attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism, particularly for pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This remains a cause for concern. The school's own attendance information highlights that rates of absence and persistent absence remain above average and disadvantaged pupils attend less well in comparison to their peers and others nationally. However, there are some green shoots of improvement this academic year. Leaders' more intelligent use of attendance information is helping them to identify attendance patterns and trends over time. The newly created junior and senior pastoral leaders use this information to ensure that parents and carers are contacted and/or visited on a daily basis should a pupil be absent. This, and improved attendance rewards and consequences, are contributing to improving rates of attendance when compared to the same time last year.

External support

The trust ably supports school leaders. School leaders receive regular advice and guidance relating to teaching, assessment, pupils' behaviour, attendance, punctuality and subject leadership. Consequently, systems and procedures are far more rigorous and support leaders' drive for continuous improvement.

School leaders work closely with specialist and national leaders in education from within the trust and beyond. Recent reviews of pupil premium funding and provision in the mathematics department have provided leaders with an external perspective on the effectiveness of each. This, and leaders' honest evaluation of their work and that of others, are beginning to improve the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and provide the basis for improvements in the mathematics department.

Leaders work closely with local authority advisers and education welfare officers regularly. This is now contributing to improving rates of attendance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the

director of children's services for Doncaster. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott
Her Majesty's Inspector