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Mrs Liz Furber
Principal
All Saints Academy Dunstable
Houghton Road
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Dear Mrs Furber

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to All Saints Academy Dunstable

Following my visit to your school on 18 October 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 was judged to require improvement at its previous section 5 inspection. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in January 2017, the school was judged to have serious weaknesses.

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:

- improve the progress of its most able pupils
- ensure that the recent improvements in the leadership and teaching of mathematics enable pupils to make better progress in the subject across key stage 4
- reduce the rates of fixed-term exclusion and persistent absence
- further improve the rigour of improvement planning to enable leaders and governors to evaluate the school's progress more effectively.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the principal, the chair of governors and a representative of the sponsor to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Meetings were also held with a range of leaders, staff and pupils. The school's improvement plan was evaluated alongside other documentation, including the school's self-evaluation of its own effectiveness and minutes from meetings of the governing body. Records of pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress were also reviewed.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a restructure of the senior leadership team has taken place. There are 15 new teachers, who joined the school in September 2018; some of these are also middle leaders. The number of pupils who choose to join the school in Year 7 is rising.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you have taken effective action to improve the overall quality of education for pupils who attend the school. You have added capacity to the senior leadership team by refocusing leaders' responsibilities and recruiting new team members. You have also been able to make other important leadership appointments, such as new deputy assistant principals and the new director of mathematics. You have strengthened your team of middle leaders and your expectations of them are high; these leaders now receive effective training and support, which is enabling them to develop their leadership skills.

As a consequence of these actions, leaders are having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' behaviour. Pupils and staff are enthusiastic about the changes made at the school and about the improving quality of education that 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 since the previous inspection. The unvalidated 2018 key stage 4 results indicate that pupils made progress that was broadly in line with that of pupils with similar starting points nationally. In 2016 and 2017, pupils' overall progress had been well below and below average, respectively. The overall progress of disadvantaged pupils at key stage 4 has also improved since the previous inspection. Although you are pleased with the recent examination results, you acknowledge that there are areas, such as key stage 4 mathematics, where improvements are still not rapid enough.

The need to reduce the variation in the progress made by different groups of pupils

was identified at your previous inspection. Although pupils with low-, middle- and high prior attainment all made improved progress at the end of key stage 4 in 2018, pupils with high prior attainment still made less progress than their peers. Your own assessment information indicates that more work needs to be done to reduce these differences. For example, pupils with low prior attainment currently make above-average progress across all year groups, whereas the progress of pupils with high prior attainment is consistently below your expectations.

Leaders are accurate in their assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, learning and assessment and their records show that the overall quality of teaching is continuing to improve. Your priorities for staff training focus on improving the key areas identified at the previous inspection, and leaders provide effective coaching to support teachers to improve their practice. Leaders evaluate the quality of teaching based upon a wide range of evidence and you acknowledge that there is still a small number of teachers whose practice needs to improve more quickly.

Governors hold you to account through meetings of the local governing body, their various committees and their visits to the school. Governors' meetings are focused on appropriately identified priorities and they provide school leaders with effective challenge and support. Your development plans address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and they outline a range of actions to drive improvement. However, your plans are not always clear enough about their intended outcomes. This makes it more difficult for governors to offer leaders support and to hold them to account.

You have acted effectively since the last inspection to bring about improvements in pupils' behaviour. Leaders have focused on improving behaviour through the establishment of a more effective climate for learning; this is based upon high expectations and mutual respect. Processes for dealing with poor behaviour are straightforward and staff now apply them more consistently. Improvements in the quality of teaching and the introduction of more effective systems have supported the significant reduction in behavioural incidents that take place in classrooms. Behaviour around the school has also improved. Pupils and staff commented positively about the improvements in the management of behaviour; they say that things are now much better. Although the behaviour of the majority of pupils has improved, leaders have been less effective in reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions that are issued to pupils. The proportion of pupils being excluded from school is still too high.

The impact of leaders' work to reduce absence and persistent absence has been mixed. Leaders have appropriate systems in place to monitor absence and pupils are rewarded for good attendance. Leaders act quickly when attendance concerns are identified and they offer support to pupils and families in order to help them overcome any obstacles to attending school. Leaders challenge parents and carers

when absence is too high. As a result of leaders' actions, pupils' overall absence is decreasing. However, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school remains well above average.

Your actions to improve the progress of students studying academic courses in the sixth form have been effective. Students are grateful for the high quality of teaching that they receive and for the support that they are provided with, both by their teachers and by other sixth-form staff. They say that staff have high expectations of them, that they are making good progress towards their challenging targets and that they know what they have to do to continue to improve their work. Overall improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at the school are having a positive impact in the sixth form. Although still below average, students' progress in academic courses improved again in 2018. Students currently studying in the sixth form continue to make improved progress.

External support

The support and challenge from your school improvement partner have been effective in helping you to check the quality of education in the school and the progress that you make over time.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Gee
Her Majesty's Inspector