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Ms Jane Mills
Acting Headteacher
Chiswick School
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Dear Ms Mills

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chiswick School

Following my visit to your school on 6 November 2018, with John Kennedy, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- embed new initiatives and ensure that they are having a positive impact on the progress made by all pupils, particularly specific groups such as the disadvantaged
- ensure that pupils' conduct and behaviour is of a consistently high standard at all times.

Evidence

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, the consultant headteacher and your senior leaders. I met with the new chair of the governing body and another governor. These meetings focused on the actions taken since the last inspection and plans for

future school improvement. Inspectors met with a group of your middle leaders and a group of teachers new to the school. They analysed a range of information provided by your leaders around behaviour and attendance. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally at break and lunchtimes and observed their conduct as they moved around the school site. They evaluated a range of pupils' work both in lessons and as part of a joint work scrutiny with a senior leader. Inspectors visited lessons jointly with your leaders, to evaluate pupils' attitudes to learning and their progress. One inspector scrutinised the school's checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school and visited your off-site provision, The Chiswick Centre.

Context

The acting headteacher has been leading the school since March 2018. Governors have appointed a new substantive headteacher who takes up their post in January 2019. A new chair of the governing body was appointed in April 2018.

Main findings

You, your senior leaders and the governing body have worked hard to sustain school improvements through a time of leadership and staffing instability. You have an accurate understanding of what you still need to address and detailed plans in place to achieve this. You benefit from a stable and competent middle leadership team who support whole-heartedly the changes you have already initiated. Consequently, you are beginning to see the impact of your actions to date in key areas such as pupils' progress and improved attendance.

The new chair of the governing body has restructured the governing body so that it is able to hold school leaders to account more effectively. Governors are very aware of the scale of the task ahead and their pivotal role in ensuring that improvements are rapid and sustainable. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in line with statutory requirements, particularly around the checks done on the suitability of staff to work at the school.

You have introduced a number of key initiatives around the quality of teaching and learning, to ensure a consistency of approach across the school. You, senior and middle leaders have reviewed the curriculum to ensure that pupils in key stage 3 have appropriate time to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to access GCSE courses. You are proud of the range of subjects and opportunities available to your pupils, for instance the chance to undertake rowing as a sport or learn Latin. Leaders, at all levels, check regularly on the quality of teaching and learning and offer appropriate support as required. Staff new to the school or profession feel well-supported. Staff work well together, feel valued and, consequently, morale is high. However, staffing instability in areas such as science continues to have a negative impact on the progress pupils make in this area. You are acutely aware that many of these initiatives are very new, with some still in the implementation stage, and that the impact on pupils' progress is therefore hard to quantify at this point.

Teachers work well in their subject teams to plan interesting activities that engage pupils in their learning. Each department has developed clear systems for informing pupils about how their work will be assessed, the knowledge and skills that they already have and what they need to do to improve. There was clear evidence in pupils' work of an ongoing dialogue between the teacher and pupil, which enabled them to make improvements to their work. You ensure that teachers have comprehensive information about the pupils that they teach, and this is used to adapt lesson time to meet particular needs. Teachers carefully track the progress pupils make and there are a range of interventions in place to support those at risk of falling behind.

You are very clear that some groups of pupils have historically not made the progress of which they are capable. In particular, you are focusing on the progress made by White British, disadvantaged boys. In March 2018, you commissioned an external review to evaluate how you have been directing pupil premium funding and its impact on pupils' progress. This review highlighted a number of areas that you quickly began to address. As a result, you have produced a detailed strategy to accelerate the progress made by disadvantaged pupils so that they can catch up with all pupils' progress nationally. This is beginning to have some impact, for instance improving the attendance of this group. However, you have rightly prioritised this as a key area for further school improvement.

Attendance overall has improved and is now just above the national average. Some year cohorts and groups, particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, still do not attend as regularly as they should. You and your leaders are aware of this and are working hard to analyse the reasons for particular pupils' persistent absence and find appropriate solutions to enable better attendance. Equally, the number of pupils being excluded from school has reduced, though further work needs to be done to reduce this further.

The Chiswick Centre provides very effective support for pupils with significant and complex needs, many of whom are at risk of permanent exclusion from school. The centre leader has created a nurturing family environment, which develops pupils' social and emotional resilience as well as their academic ability. Information provided by school leaders indicates that this provision has proved highly effective in sustaining these pupils in full-time education.

At the time of the previous inspection, you had recently introduced a new behaviour policy. This has had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning during lessons. Pupils are genuinely interested in their learning and many engage enthusiastically in the set activities. Inspectors found some pupils to be extremely polite and articulate. They held open doors, said 'good morning' and were keen to share their positive experiences of life at Chiswick School. For instance, one group were keen to explain their work as Anne Frank ambassadors, which aims to 'stamp out prejudice' in any form. However, far too many pupils require constant reminders about their conduct around the school site. This is particularly true during lesson changeover and in congested areas such as the dining hall.

External support

You and your team benefit from a wide range of support. The headteacher from Brentford School for Girls provides ongoing leadership guidance and practical on-site support. You have commissioned other local schools to support specific departments. For instance, Lampton School has offered consultant support to your science department and the Heathland School is working with your mathematics department.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector