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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs S Dench
The West Grantham Academy St Hugh's
The Avenue
Dysart Road
Grantham
Lincolnshire
NG31 7PX

Dear Mrs Dench

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of The West Grantham Academy St Hugh's

Following my visit to your school on 28 November 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in February 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, directors of the West Grantham Academies Trust (WGAT), a range of curriculum and house leaders, attendance officers, the coordinator (SENCo) for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the designated senior leader for safeguarding. I also met formally with two groups of pupils and spoke with others informally around the school and during their lessons. The trust's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. I visited parts of six lessons, with the school's teaching and learning coach. We looked at samples of pupils' work in lessons and discussed strengths and weaknesses observed. I considered a variety of documents, including records of monitoring activities, information about pupils' progress and attainment, records relating to attendance and behaviour, and information about safeguarding. I also read minutes of the governing body meetings and the parent forum and

looked at a range of policies and information published on the school website.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been some changes to the structure of the senior leadership team. The team has reduced in number, with responsibility for behaviour and personal development now undertaken by senior leaders and heads of houses. A new curriculum leader for English started at the beginning of the summer term. After a period of turbulence, staffing is now stable.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The executive headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about much change, and there are early signs of improvement. She leads with a clear moral purpose and with the aim to provide the best for all pupils. She has brought about a strong sense of belief among staff and pupils, and there is a strong sense of purpose across the school. This is reflected in the school's three core values of 'creativity, responsibility and wisdom' (CRW). She is ably assisted by senior leaders, who are also committed to bringing about further improvement.

The executive headteacher has established effective leadership structures to bring about the improvements needed. Middle leaders have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and are held to account by senior leaders. Middle leaders have been supported with professional development to improve their leadership skills as well as to enhance their knowledge and understanding of their areas of responsibility. Curriculum leaders have developed long-term curriculum plans to improve teaching and learning in their subjects. They are aware that the next steps are to implement the curriculum through teaching that reflects higher expectations, to meet pupils' needs. Heads of houses are establishing a sense of belonging and their leadership is beginning to improve behaviour and attendance. All leaders with whom I met demonstrated the drive and passion to improve provision for all pupils. Staff morale is positive and there is a 'can-do' attitude across all leadership levels.

Governance arrangements have been strengthened following the trust's review of governance. Many of the recommendations have been implemented. Directors have an appreciation of the strengths and weakness of the school and provide effective support and challenge to leaders. They have not commissioned a pupil premium review since the last inspection, as they continued to implement the recommendations of a review undertaken in July 2017. The governing body plans a further pupil premium review in the spring of 2019.

After reviewing the school's areas for improvement, I concluded that leaders' actions have brought about the following:

- Leadership capacity has been strengthened, especially at middle-

- leadership level. The impact of leaders' work is beginning to show, through improving outcomes in core subjects and improvement in pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- The quality of teaching and learning is variable between and within departments. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough. Pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Pupils' attitudes vary and, on occasions, some disrupt the learning of others. When the teaching is effective, pupils respond positively and relish the opportunity to extend their knowledge and deepen their understanding.
 - Leaders have ensured that there is consistency in the use of the school's assessment policy. Feedback provides guidance on next steps in learning and pupils address these in their weekly CRW sessions. However, there is still variation in the effectiveness with which teachers use this information to plan to meet pupils' needs.
 - The behaviour of pupils has improved since the last inspection. The revised behaviour policy and new approach to rewards and sanctions are consistently applied. Individuals are supported to improve their conduct and self-discipline. The proportion of pupils excluded is reducing, but the number of permanent exclusions is still above the national average for secondary schools.
 - Leaders have established systems to improve pupils' attendance. There is improvement in pupils' overall attendance and a reduction in persistent absence. However, the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is still too high.
 - Provisional outcomes for 2018 show improved attainment when compared with 2017 outcomes. Proportionally more pupils gained grade 4 and grade 5 and above in English and mathematics. However, these proportions remain below national averages. Some pupils gained higher grades in some subjects. However, the most able pupils are not making sufficient progress.
 - Provisional progress measures also show a slight improvement. Disadvantaged pupils made better progress in 2018 when compared with 2017. Pupils who speak English as an additional language made stronger progress in languages and the humanities than their peers. Nevertheless, progress measures remain poor.
 - The school finds it difficult to pinpoint how much progress current pupils make because assessments and predictions have not been consistently reliable. However, leaders are more confident in interpreting this information and use it to determine appropriate support.
 - Leaders have a clear understanding of the improvements already made and what needs to improve further. They plan to add clear milestones to

the improvement plan to enable them to evaluate regularly the impact of their actions and improvement strategies.

- Leaders recognise the positive impact of external support to the school. They value the opportunities for professional development provided by the Diocese of Lincoln, William Farr CofE Comprehensive School, Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance, Trent Valley Teaching School Alliance and the George Spencer Teaching School Alliance. This support has had a positive impact on the quality of leadership and management as well as on teaching, learning and assessment.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the director of education for the Diocese of Lincoln, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Davies
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January/February 2018:

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the pupil premium and SEN funding are used effectively to improve the outcomes and attendance and reduce the exclusions of eligible pupils
 - continuing to develop the leadership skills of middle leaders
 - ensuring that the leadership of pupils' behaviour and attendance improves rapidly.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that teachers' planning addresses the learning needs of pupils, in order that the pupils develop the knowledge and skills needed to progress in all subjects that they study
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations for what pupils can achieve and that they provide pupils with work that is challenging and meets their needs
 - ensuring that teachers apply the whole-school assessment policy consistently well.
- Improve the quality of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - reducing rapidly the number of pupils excluded from school
 - ensuring that all pupils and groups of pupils attend school.
- Improve pupils' attainment and progress rapidly, particularly at key stage 4, by ensuring that disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and the most able pupils make good progress and achieve the standards they should.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.