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Mrs Jane Green
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Green

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Longridge High School A Maths and Computing College

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 2019, 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. However, I identified a key area that needs to be rectified.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that teachers focus on what pupils need to know and learn in their subject areas to be successful.

Evidence

During the inspection, I discussed the actions taken since the last inspection with the headteacher and other senior leaders; a group of middle leaders; pupils; three members of the governing body; a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Fylde Coast Academy Trust. The school-improvement plan was evaluated. I also carried out a learning walk with a senior leader and looked at

pupils' work. The single central record was scrutinised as were the minutes of meetings of the governing body and a sample of schemes of work.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been changes in the senior-leadership team. A new head of mathematics has been appointed and several teaching appointments made across departments. The mathematics department has experienced the most change, with most teachers appointed in the past 18 months. The governing body has also welcomed new members.

Main findings

The inspection judgements in September 2017 aided the morale and focus of staff to continue their efforts to improve the school. The outcomes for 2017, which were not available at the time of the inspection, came as a disappointment and brought about an even greater sense of urgency. Although pupils' attainment has risen notably, their progress, especially that of the disadvantaged, remains weak, despite some improvement.

The three areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report centred around improving teaching, consistent use of assessment systems by middle leaders and improving attendance. Staff have been working hard to improve the quality of questioning and ensure that there is a consistent approach to teaching. There have been many opportunities for staff development and this is regularly reviewed and evaluated. By what you see in classrooms and pupils' books, it has brought about some improvements.

Middle leaders use the school's assessment system with greater consistency. However, we discussed the importance of being clear about the limitations of assessment and understanding how assessment can be useful, as opposed to how it can be used erroneously and become a meaningless burden for teachers and leaders.

Pupils' rates of attendance have risen since the last inspection. There are still some year groups where attendance is lower than expected but staff have a very clear and thorough process for monitoring attendance. Despite the efforts of the school, the parents and carers of a very small number of pupils do not encourage good attendance. This has a negative impact on the school's overall figure.

While focusing on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, we discussed why pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Through inspection activities, such as the learning walk, the scrutiny of schemes of work and discussions, it became obvious that pupils are not being taught the knowledge that they need to be successful. Schemes of work focus on what pupils should be able to do. Lessons are very focused on examination techniques and teachers' expectations

of what pupils are capable of are too low for some. It is not always clear how new teaching builds on what pupils should already know.

The school-improvement plan includes the areas for improvement from the last inspection and identifies additional key priorities. However, it contains too many day-to-day aspects that distract from the essentials.

Governors have played a critical role in improvements but, at times, have involved themselves too much in the day-to-day running of the school. In addition, while they are very supportive, they have not always challenged leaders appropriately or urgently enough.

External support

The school is receiving support from Lancashire Local Authority, the Fylde Coast Academy Trust and an external consultant who works alongside senior and middle leaders in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector