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Mr Andrew Robinson  
Head of School  
Stoke High School – Ormiston Academy  
Maidenhall Approach  
Ipswich  
Suffolk  
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Dear Mr Robinson

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stoke High School – Ormiston Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 15 July 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. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in March 2018, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Leaders, governors and trustees 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 learning activities provide all pupils with enough challenge, and that teachers have higher expectations of the presentation of pupils' work
- further reduce rates of fixed-period exclusion, absence and persistent absence
- improve its evaluation of the impact of the support that it provides to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, the executive principal, governors and a representative from the trust to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I also held meetings with a range of leaders, staff and pupils. I evaluated the school's improvement plan, alongside other documentation, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also reviewed records of pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress. I made visits to a number of lessons, jointly with leaders.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the school has formed close links with two other local secondary schools in the trust. An executive principal has been appointed to oversee the leadership of all three schools. The principal who was in post at the time of the previous inspection resigned in August 2018. You were appointed in January 2019.

There have been a number of new appointments to other key leadership positions, and in September 2019 the school will be fully staffed for the first time in several years. Although many pupils have both joined and left the school since the previous inspection, the overall number of pupils on the school roll has remained stable.

## **Main findings**

Since the previous inspection, leaders 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 a new vice-principal. In addition, you have been able to make other important leadership appointments. For example, leaders of English, science and a SEND co-ordinator have all been appointed this year. You have also strengthened your team of pastoral leaders, and your expectations of them are high. Staff have confidence in your leadership.

The trust's decisive action, including the appointment of the executive principal following the disappointing 2018 GCSE results, continues to support the improvements being made at the school. Leaders are now 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 with which they are provided. They say that it is accompanied by effective support.

Leaders at all levels receive effective training which enables them to develop their leadership skills. They also have a clear understanding of the actions that are needed to continue to improve the school. However, many leaders are new to their

positions, and it is too early to see the full impact of their actions.

Senior leaders are accurate in their evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, learning and assessment. Their records show that the overall quality of teaching is continuing to improve. Leaders' priorities for staff training focus on improving the key areas identified at the previous inspection, and they provide effective coaching to support teachers to improve their practice.

Improvements in the overall quality of teaching are now becoming embedded, as the number of permanent teachers working at the school increases. However, there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Learning activities do not always provide pupils with enough challenge, while teachers' expectations for the presentation of pupils' work are inconsistent.

Trustees and governors hold leaders to account for their work through meetings of the strategic progress board, the local governing body and its various committees. Meetings focus on appropriately identified priorities and provide leaders with effective challenge and support. The school's improvement plan addresses the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and it outlines an appropriate range of actions to lead improvement. The plan is generally very clear about its intended outcomes. This allows trustees and governors to review its impact routinely.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have acted successfully to bring about improvements in pupils' behaviour. New processes for dealing with poor behaviour are straightforward, and staff now apply them more consistently. Behaviour has also improved, because the quality of teaching is improving. Pupils say that most teachers have high expectations of them and that behaviour in lessons is generally positive. Most parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agree that pupils are well behaved. Leaders' actions have also resulted both in a reduction in the use of internal exclusion and a significant reduction in the overall use of fixed-period exclusions. However, the proportion of pupils that receive fixed-period exclusions is still too high.

The impact of leaders' work to reduce absence and persistent absence has been mixed. Leaders have appropriate systems to monitor absence and they reward pupils for good attendance. Leaders act quickly when attendance concerns are identified and they offer support to pupils and families to help them overcome any obstacles to attending the school. Leaders challenge parents when absence is too high. Rates of absence and persistent absence are decreasing, but they are still above average. Leaders have appropriate plans to work more closely with the families of pupils whose absence has been too slow to improve.

Pupils with SEND and those who join the school midway through their secondary education are well supported. Staff quickly identify any barriers to learning and

provide pupils with appropriate support. Leaders are effective at tracking the overall progress made by both groups of pupils, and this is improving over time. However, leaders' evaluation of the specific initiatives that they put in place to support pupils with SEND is less effective. Leaders do not always know which types of support have the most, or least, impact on the overall progress of pupils with SEND.

Leaders' actions to bring about improvements in the teaching of English are beginning to have a positive impact. Curriculum leaders have quickly evaluated the strengths and weaknesses in provision, and their plans for improvement are well focused. The quality of English teaching is improving. However, leaders in this area are new to their positions, and it is too early to see the full impact of their actions.

Pupils at the school are well looked after and kept safe. The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff at all levels receive routine safeguarding training and they know how to identify pupils who are potentially at risk. Staff understand and follow leaders' clear procedures for reporting any safeguarding concerns.

### **External support**

The trust offers leaders a wide range of effective support, including training that helps leaders and teachers to improve their practice. Support from the trust, especially during a period of staffing instability at the beginning of the 2018/19 academic year, has been instrumental in the school's progress.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Gee  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**