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30 September 2019

Mr Paul Delamaine
Acting Headteacher
Hailey Hall School
Hailey Lane
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Hertfordshire
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Dear Mr Delamaine

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hailey Hall School

Following my visit to your school on 19 September 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 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 received an overall effectiveness judgement of requires improvement at its last inspection.

Senior leaders 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your team of senior leaders, a group of pupils and two trustees to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also held telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority, and a member of the restructured governing board. The school improvement plans were evaluated. You shared a range of documents with me to show recent developments and the impact of the actions taken by leaders to improve the school. I visited a range of lessons with senior leaders to observe pupils at work.

Context

Since the last inspection, the school's leadership has changed. The previous headteacher left the school in April 2019 and you were appointed as acting headteacher. An assistant headteacher has been promoted to acting deputy headteacher to provide further capacity to improve the school. You have clarified the roles and responsibilities of staff and other middle leaders to support you in making improvements. New members and trustees have joined the school to strengthen governance.

Main findings

Following the last inspection, the school got off to a slow start. The rate of improvement quickened over the summer term as some long-standing leadership issues were resolved. You and your interim leadership team know what the school's strengths and weaknesses are, and the actions needed to improve it. You have shared with staff your aims and ambitions for the school and enlisted their support in helping you to secure further improvement. The roles and responsibilities of interim leaders, staff and trustees are much clearer. Staff morale is high.

Improvement plans include all of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Plans show clearly what you, other leaders and staff need to do to strengthen the school's work. You are holding staff to account by checking that they are doing what they have been trusted to do. This is leading to improvement.

A review of governance in May 2019 carried out by the local authority recommended a range of actions to ensure that trustees contribute fully to the school's improvement. Trustees are now much clearer about their roles. They have wasted no time in meeting regularly and forming their own plans for improving governance.

The review also recommended restructuring the board of members to oversee the work of trustees. This new group includes experienced leaders and a national leader in governance. The first meeting of members and trustees is planned for later this term. This new arrangement should provide you with an accurate overview of the impact that trustees are having and how they can support you in determining the long-term vision for the school's future development.

Trustees welcome the openness and transparency you have brought to the school. They feel that your detailed reports give them the information they need to oversee the school's work, and to hold you and other leaders to account.

At the time of the previous inspection additional funding was not being used well enough. This has changed. Your deputy headteacher has taken full responsibility for improving this aspect of the school's work and is doing this work effectively. Her systematic recording of information enables her to direct funding to meet the

different needs, abilities and interests of each disadvantaged pupil. The pupil premium funding now is having more of an impact on the learning and welfare of all disadvantaged pupils. A new trustee, who recently joined the board, provides further support for her by overseeing the spending of the pupil premium.

Much of the effective teaching noted at the time of the previous inspection remains in place. Further improvements have been made to the quality of education. A life-skills programme has been introduced to prepare pupils for adulthood. Pupils told me that they value this. The programme makes learning real and teaches pupils the skills they will need for the next stage of their education, training or the workplace. You recognise that further work needs to be done to build an effective curriculum that fully meets the needs of all pupils. Work to develop this is underway.

Staff know well the pupils' needs and interests. Topics are chosen that capture pupils' interest. They use computers regularly to present their work and find things out for themselves. Effective questioning encourages pupils to take part in discussions and come up with their own ideas. All of this is underpinned by good relations and effective management of behaviour.

Pupils enjoy school. Those who met with me said that behaviour is generally good and school is a safe place to be. Throughout the day pupils conducted themselves well, were pleasant and polite. However, your records show a high number of incidents of misbehaviour were recorded throughout 2019. This includes minor incidents that usually do not disrupt the learning of others for any length of time. Your new leader responsible for monitoring behaviour recognises that further analysis of this information would present a more accurate view of the behaviour and attitudes of all pupils.

Exclusions have risen sharply. You feel that this was due to pupils' uncertainty during a period of change in the school's leadership and also the raised expectations staff have of pupils who display very challenging behaviour. Staff feel supported by leaders in managing this type of behaviour. However, overall rates of exclusion remain too high.

Communications with parents and carers is improving. A recent open evening enabled parents and carers to visit the school and meet with staff and trustees. Weekly communication by email with parents and carers now enables you to keep them fully informed about their children's education and welfare.

Safeguarding arrangements remain effective. Checks on the backgrounds of staff who have joined the school since the previous inspection are recorded in detail on the school's single central record.

External support

The local authority has welcomed improved relations with the school. You and your senior team have worked with local authority personnel to strengthen governance and the use of the pupil premium, and to identify what is working well and what needs improving. Furthermore, you have asked local authority staff to visit the school later this term to review the quality of behaviour and show where improvements can be made. Regular contact with social care services and other agencies is ensuring that the most vulnerable pupils are getting timely support to keep them safe.

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

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector