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Tash Hurtado
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Dear Ms Hurtado

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Harefield Academy

Following my visit to your school on 12 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 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:

- improve the quality and impact of the curriculum in all subjects
- embed the use of the curriculum as a model to evaluate pupils' progress in terms of knowing more, remembering more and being able to do more.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders and the chair of the governing body. These meetings focused on the actions taken since the last inspection and plans for future school improvement. I also met with two of your middle leaders and a small group of administrative staff. I spoke to a group of pupils at lunchtime to ascertain their views about improvements made since the previous inspection. I visited lessons jointly with you and your leaders to look at how teachers are implementing the curriculum. In lessons, I sampled pupils' work to gain

a view about the progress they are making through the curriculum. I also scrutinised the school's checks on the suitability of staff and held a discussion with your designated safeguarding leader.

Context

The number of support staff and teaching staff has decreased considerably in the past two years as a result of restructuring. The school is continuing to explore the possibility of becoming part of a multi-academy trust.

Main findings

You, senior leaders and the governing body have worked hard to sustain school improvements through a time of staff restructure and realignment. You have an accurate understanding of what still needs to be addressed. Detailed plans for improvement are in place. You benefit from a stable, competent and supportive middle leadership team. The impact of actions in key areas such as implementation of the curriculum and improved attendance are starting to be seen.

A number of key initiatives around the quality of teaching and learning have been introduced 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. Leaders, at all levels, check regularly on the implementation of the curriculum and offer appropriate support as required. Staff work well together, feel valued and, consequently, morale is high. However, you are acutely aware that some subjects are not as far ahead in their curriculum planning and implementation as are, for instance, mathematics and English. Staff are beginning to look at new ways to evaluate the progress that pupils make through the curriculum. The extensive professional development in place is addressing this as a key priority for improvement.

You were open and honest about the legacy of underachievement across the curriculum, in particular for disadvantaged pupils. You and your leadership team have tackled this head on with a clear plan for improving teachers' understanding of how best to implement the curriculum. As a result, pupils' outcomes have improved in recent years, both at key stage 4 and in the sixth form. Clearly, you are proud of the fact that the school achieved its best ever results in 2019. Indicative results show that in 2019 pupils' attainment was above average in mathematics, and broadly average in English and science.

The work done to improve attendance and reduce persistence absence has been particularly effective. Leaders have set clear targets in their attendance action plan, focusing on tackling the challenges that families face. Strong partnership work with the local authority's participation team is beginning to have the desired impact. For example, the attendance of White British disadvantaged pupils and those with

special educational needs and/or disabilities, has improved since the previous inspection. Both overall attendance and persistent absence are now much closer to the national average.

Leaders have undertaken a wholesale review of the systems and processes in the human resources department. With the help of external specialist support they have brought about greater efficiencies in the way they work. Administration staff are meticulous in the way they check documentation and record information. The checks and balances in place mean that it is much more difficult for anything of importance to slip through the net. The effective systems and processes that prevail in the mainstream school are mirrored well in the boarding provision. This includes all aspects of safeguarding.

Governors are aware of the scale of the task ahead and their pivotal role in ensuring that the clear improvements made are sustainable. They need to improve their understanding of the school's curriculum and its critical role in ensuring a good quality of education.

External support

Some experienced headteachers provide you with good support and collaboration. You are part of the Harrow collegiate teaching school alliance. This includes working with teachers and leaders in targeted departments to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and raise pupils' achievement. Staff benefit from this well-established partnership.

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

Yours sincerely

Nasim Butt
Her Majesty's Inspector