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Mrs Jessica Humphrey
Executive Headteacher
Kings Ash Academy
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Dear Mrs Humphrey

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kings Ash Academy

Following my visit to your school on 26 November 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 the trust 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:

- Strengthen the links between the in-class support and the additional interventions in place for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders and subject leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I held a meeting with the chief education officer of the Bay Education Trust. I also had a telephone conversation with the leader of the local teaching school. I conducted lesson visits in every year group,

jointly with school leaders. I spoke with pupils and scrutinised their writing and mathematics books. I evaluated the school's improvement plan and spoke with a group of teachers about the school's development.

Context

Since the last inspection, you have continued to increase leadership capacity in the school. You have based yourself in the school on a full-time basis. The trust board has restructured governance, so there is no longer a local governing body. Temporary members of staff have now been made permanent.

Main findings

You and your leadership team continue to work with strong resolve to improve the school's work. Senior leaders have devised plans that are fit for purpose. The trust board tracks the school's progress towards the targets set. Trust leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have continued to strengthen their checks on your team's actions to improve the school.

You and the head of school are unequivocally ambitious for what pupils can achieve. Your team's actions have led to a rise in teachers' expectations. The head of school has built a consensus amongst staff about the purpose and design of the curriculum. Staff morale is high. Staff value the support they receive and share your vision.

Senior leaders meet with you regularly to discuss the impact of the work that they do to support teachers. You make good use of these findings to inform what you do next. As a result, the school's curriculum is better matched to pupils' abilities.

You and your senior leadership team have provided training for curriculum leaders. This has been effective. Less experienced leaders now have the necessary skills to support others in delivering their subjects. This has led to a greater consistency in the teaching of English and mathematics. Teachers' subject knowledge is strengthening. Pupils with gaps in their learning are catching up.

Senior leaders have ensured that teachers use assessment more precisely. Teachers can explicitly identify the skills that pupils need to improve their writing. Teachers carefully consider the books they use with their classes. As a result, pupils are exposed to a wider range of vocabulary. They use this vocabulary in their writing to good effect. You and your team have implemented spelling catch-up programmes but there is more to be done to help pupils to spell accurately. The quality of pupils' writing is often marred by errors in spelling, particularly in the older pupils' classes.

Leaders have sharpened the mathematics curriculum. It is well organised. Teachers' subject knowledge has improved. Consequently, pupils' fluency is improving strongly. Pupils can think deeply in mathematics. They organise their calculations

neatly and work methodically when solving problems. However, there are some inconsistencies emerging between the support that pupils with SEND receive in class compared to when they are out of the class. This slows pupils' mathematical understanding. Your senior leaders have identified where additional training is needed, but it is too soon to see any improvements.

The early years continues to be a strength of the school. The Nursery is having a positive effect on children's readiness for school. In 2019, the proportion of children leaving the Reception classes ready for Year 1 was similar to the national average. Teachers have prioritised children's early language skills. Consequently, children's readiness for reading is a strength. Your leaders continue to make close checks to ensure that pupils keep up with the demands of key stage 1.

School leaders are ambitious for pupils to attend school more regularly. Leaders have formed better relationships with families when pupils are persistently absent from school. Consequently, pupils are attending school more regularly. The trust board also keeps a close oversight on attendance and challenges leaders regularly.

External support

You engage widely with other schools and advisers. School leaders are working effectively in partnership with the local teaching school (Oldway Primary), part of the Torbay Teaching School Alliance (TTSA). Support from the TTSA and additional consultants has strengthened the leadership capacity in the school. You coordinate additional consultant support well, keeping a close eye on the school's priorities so that improvement gains momentum.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector