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Richard Lord
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Dear Mr Lord

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Deepings School

Following my visit to your school on 22 June 2021, 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(2) 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- eradicate low-level disruption in lessons.

Context

Since the previous inspection in January 2020, leaders have appointed a director of mathematics and a senior assistant headteacher. New subject leaders of mathematics, humanities and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education have also been appointed.

The school was closed to most pupils during the spring and summer terms in 2020. During this period, most pupils learned from home, accessing materials and work set by teachers. During the second period of lockdown, between January and March 2021, the curriculum was delivered remotely, via 'live' lessons.

Main findings

Leaders are determined to improve the school and have not allowed the COVID-19 pandemic to detract from their main purpose of providing a good quality of education and promoting pupils' safety and well-being. The headteacher is well supported by the senior leadership team. Staff understand the school's priorities and share leaders' ambition.

Leaders have systematically addressed all the areas identified as needing improvement at the last inspection. They have introduced several changes to improve the school. Sometimes staff have needed more support to implement these changes. Leaders recognise that further work needs to be done in some aspects of the school's provision and have appropriate plans in place to achieve this.

The inspection in January 2020 judged the quality of education to be good and applied the transition arrangements, indicating that some areas of the curriculum needed further work. Senior leaders have worked with subject leaders to support and challenge them to bring about the necessary developments. All subject areas now have clear 'roadmaps', setting out the important content that pupils should learn and when. Leaders regularly review how each subject is delivered, identifying areas for further development. Newly appointed leaders in some subject areas have strengthened the quality of the school's curriculum. A three-year key stage 3 has now been put in place, as planned.

Leaders recognise the importance of the PSHE curriculum in supporting pupils' personal development. A new PSHE leader has been appointed. Leaders have completely changed their approach to delivering this subject. Pupils now study PSHE as a discrete, timetabled subject. Curriculum plans are carefully thought out and cover an appropriate range of subjects. The plans set out how pupils will build on important knowledge, year on year, in an age-appropriate way. Alongside the timetabled sessions, pupils reflect on topics via assemblies and tutor sessions. Leaders have worked collaboratively to map the PSHE content across the curriculum. This helps pupils to apply their knowledge in different contexts. For

example, when Year 11 pupils study Macbeth in their English lessons, they reflect on their learning about healthy relationships, asking whether Lady Macbeth was guilty of coercive control.

The curriculum in the sixth form has also improved. Curriculum 'roadmaps' are in place here too. Leaders have ensured that students experience work-related learning. The restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic have meant that some of this has been delivered remotely. Plans are in place for further activity towards the end of the summer term. Leaders are keen for Year 12 students to undertake face-to-face work experience, once COVID-19 restrictions permit.

Leaders have introduced a new, structured approach to managing attendance concerns. They quickly identify when an individual's attendance dips and intervene appropriately. Leaders are beginning to identify barriers to regular attendance. In the autumn term 2020, attendance had fallen and was low. However, it has since improved. Whole-school attendance is currently similar to that at the time of the last inspection. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has reduced since the autumn term 2020, but it remains high. It is particularly high for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Attendance in the sixth form has improved, including for students in Year 13. Improving attendance and reducing persistent absence remains a priority for the school.

Leaders have amended the behaviour policy and clarified expectations of pupils and staff. However, some pupils say that not all teachers apply the behaviour policy consistently. Low-level disruption remains a concern. Instances of more serious behaviour have reduced. The proportion of fixed-term exclusions has reduced considerably. Plans are in place to refine the behaviour policy and train staff to ensure they apply it consistently. Several parents remain concerned about bullying. However, pupils reported that they do not consider bullying to be a problem. Pupils told me that they feel safe and are confident to report concerns, knowing that staff will deal with them quickly and effectively. Leaders are keen to continue to work with parents, pupils and staff to ensure there is a consistent approach to tackling it effectively.

Additional support

The Anthem Schools Trust provides effective support and challenge to leaders. Trust leaders understand the school's strengths and areas needing further improvement. They work closely with senior and middle leaders to bring about the necessary improvements. For example, subject specialists from the trust have supported curriculum leaders in developing subject plans. Teachers benefit from professional learning networks. For example, they share best practice and support each other by moderating pupils' work.

The trust has secured support from other schools and other academy trusts. Leaders have found this valuable in improving the quality of education across the school, including in the sixth form.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders and the director of secondary education from the Anthem Schools Trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons and spoke with pupils. I observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime and spoke informally with pupils. I considered the 201 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 121 free-text responses. I met with a group of staff and considered the 120 responses to the staff questionnaire. I scrutinised a range of monitoring documents, including the school's analysis of attendance and behaviour information, curriculum reviews and the school's self-evaluation. I scrutinised the single central record and looked at safeguarding records.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Anthem Schools Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector