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Christine McLintock
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Dear Mrs McLintock

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sir William Ramsay School

Following my visit to your school on 29 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:

- ensure that the planned curriculum is implemented to the standard that leaders intend so that pupils know more and remember more across all subjects
- accelerate governors' training and build their skills so that they hold leaders to account effectively for their work to improve the quality of education and pupils' personal development.

Context

Since the last on-site inspection in December 2018, there have been changes to the leadership team, including a new deputy headteacher and a new assistant headteacher. The chair of trustees, who is also the chair of the governing body, has changed twice.

Main findings

You and your leadership team are raising expectations of all at the school and have an accurate understanding of what still needs to be done. The recent changes to the leadership team have strengthened your capacity for improvement.

Subject leaders have refined their curriculum plans to take account of gaps in pupils' knowledge. You and your senior team have worked with subject leaders to ensure that teachers know the 'essential' and 'desirable' knowledge that all pupils need to learn and remember in their subjects. You have also helped staff to consider how pupils can remember and recall what they have learned. Your senior team is providing appropriate development and support for teachers to help raise the consistency of education across the school so that pupils receive the quality that you intend.

Teachers have considered how they can best adapt lessons so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can access the learning. The pupil passports for each pupil with SEND have helped teachers to understand pupils' identified needs. The regular sharing of ideas has helped them to understand how to make effective adaptations.

You have identified reading as a whole-school priority, especially for the weakest readers. The leader responsible for this has trained ex-sixth-form students to administer a reading programme that you have previously had success with. You have rightly made sure that these students have had safeguarding training and checks, and that they are supervised as they work with pupils. The session I visited had a real buzz of purpose.

The pandemic has hindered your work to embed a strong culture for learning across the school, but you have continued these efforts, ably led by the new deputy

headteacher. Most of the pupils I saw were keen to focus on their work. Pupils told me that they like the improved consistency from staff, for example making sure that the mobile phone policy is followed by all.

Year 11 and 13 pupils have now left the school. Your team provided extra work-related learning sessions for them. Pupils all have plans for their futures. The support and intervention team is keeping in touch with them and intends to do so until they are settled in their chosen destinations.

The work of governors has not had the impact required. They have re-formed again and have conducted a skills audit to identify what training they need. They recognise the need to focus on key school priorities. For example, you are further strengthening pupils' personal development through a greater focus on relationships and sex education. Governors have not considered how they will assure themselves that this work meets pupils' needs.

Additional support

You have made good use of focused support from the local authority and local schools. You have found the local authority school improvement manager to be particularly useful in helping to confirm that you have taken the appropriate actions around the administration of safeguarding processes.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, teachers, pupils, the chair of the governing body and another governor, and the local authority school improvement manager to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

With leaders, I visited a sample of lessons and looked at work in pupils' books. I also considered school improvement plans, minutes from meetings of the governing body and checked the single central record. I considered the views of 195 parents through Ofsted's Parent View online survey, including 116 written comments. I also took into account the views of staff through conversations and the 51 responses to the online staff survey.

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 Buckinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Lucy English
Her Majesty's Inspector