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8 July 2021

Jamie MacLean
Principal
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Dear Mr MacLean

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dover Christ Church Academy

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 four 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:

- devise and implement a coherent whole-school approach that improves pupils' literacy
- continue the planned revisions to each subject's curriculum so that teachers know what the essential knowledge is that pupils should learn and remember over time.

Context

Since the last inspection in March 2019, one new assistant vice principal has been appointed.

Main findings

Since the last full inspection, you and your leadership team have continued to make improvements to the school. You are determined and relentless in your drive for progress. Your work to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve was clearly evident during this inspection. There is now a growing culture of achievement and pride at the academy.

An area that you have prioritised has been the low rates of attendance. Leaders work diligently to address this. Currently, attendance is higher than the national average. Year 11 and Year 13 have just finished their courses, but you are still keeping in touch with them. Teachers offer induction activities for those who are transferring to the sixth form. Pupils preparing for their next move to employment, training or higher education receive support from school staff to ensure a successful transition.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, your senior leaders have made strong headway with the structure of the curriculum. Subject leaders have also embarked on a thorough planning review of each subject's content. This has led to greater clarity on what pupils learn, and when. However, they do not yet have a clear rationale for the sequencing of the curriculum. It is not spelled out how pupils' knowledge will consolidate and grow over time.

You have made important improvements in the development of teachers' expertise. Leaders have devised a set of expectations that focus on delivering subject matter clearly. This also establishes important ways in which teachers can check pupils' understanding and pick up on misconceptions quickly. However, the delivery is still variable. Some teachers need additional support to ensure that they use these strategies successfully.

There is a culture of inclusion across the school. Leaders encourage all teachers to carefully consider the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or

disabilities (SEND). Each teacher has helpful information about the individuals they teach. This includes guidance on the needs of those pupils who are disadvantaged. Staff use what they know in order to target the support more effectively for these pupils and those with SEND.

You are very aware that many of your pupils enter Year 7 not yet able to read and write fluently. With the interruptions caused by partial closures, you have not been able to bring in more of your strategies for developing reading. You have rightly identified this as a priority for action in the new academic year. You and your team know that, without reading fluency, pupils will not succeed as they should.

You and your leaders work well with staff to bring about progress. This is recognised widely. As one parent wrote, 'The school and its teachers have always gone above and beyond when it comes to teaching and looking out for their students.'

Additional support

Trustees have made a strong contribution to the continuing improvement of the school. They have expanded their monitoring activities, and take an active role in checking on the school's priorities. Trustees have helped shape important innovations at the school, such as the new expectations for the delivery of curriculum content.

Trustees have also ensured that the school has benefited from external support. They have brought in national leaders of education who have given influential advice regarding leadership and curriculum development.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, pupils and staff to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I visited a range of lessons accompanied by leaders and spoke with pupils about their learning. I held meetings with trustees of the school, including the chair of the trustees, and spoke with a consultant who has been working with the school. I considered a range of documents, including your improvement plans and evaluation of the quality of education. I checked the single central record and discussed procedures with the member of staff who maintains it. I took into account the 77 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including 24 free texts, and the 85 replies to the staff survey.

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

Yours sincerely

Yasmin Maskatiya
Her Majesty's Inspector