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19 July 2021

David Priestley
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Dear Mr Priestley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Greenfield Community College, A Specialist Arts and Science 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:

- assure themselves that the curriculum at key stage 3 provides sufficient time and opportunity for pupils to learn the planned curriculum in full.

Context

Leaders have continued to work with teachers and external partners to address improvement priorities. The implementation of plans to develop the curriculum has slowed down as a result of COVID-19.

Since the previous inspection, a new deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have joined the leadership team. New subject leaders have been appointed in history and science. In September 2021, new faculty leaders will take up their roles in art and technologies, humanities and mathematics. Eleven teachers have left the school.

There have been a number of changes to governance, including the appointment of a new chair of the governing body.

Year 11 pupils formally completed their studies on 18 June 2021. Leaders are providing bridging courses for Year 11 pupils that include visits to local colleges. Some Year 11 pupils continue to attend master classes at school in readiness for A-level study.

Main findings

You and your leadership team have taken significant action to secure improvement. You have restructured the leadership team to give a stronger focus on school priorities. You are giving subject leaders more time to focus on the curriculum. This is building stronger capacity for long-term improvement.

You have used funding from the ONE Vision programme to improve staff's training. You have given time to departments to strengthen curriculum planning. Staff within departments now plan together. They consider how the curriculum will be sequenced over time. You have introduced strategies to help teachers check that pupils have remembered key content. The changes you are making are part of a wider drive to raise expectations.

You are introducing new strategies to check the impact of training. Staff observe one another's practice. They evaluate how well new approaches to teaching and learning are working. By planning together, subject leaders are creating more consistent expectations of what should be achieved.

Your team is refreshing approaches to reading. New schemes are being brought in to support weaker readers. These include programmes to develop pupils' phonics knowledge. Other programmes are helping pupils to strengthen their knowledge of subject specific vocabulary. You are also enhancing reading for pleasure. You are providing regular time to read in the 'Time for Success' tutorial sessions. You have purchased class texts for these sessions. You aim to help pupils appreciate reading

beyond the English classroom. While it is too early to measure the effect of these initiatives, they reflect a renewed commitment to reading.

You and your senior team have reviewed the curriculum. You point out signs of breadth and variety in the curriculum. For example, over 80% of pupils follow an arts course at key stage 4. You have asked subject leaders to check that curriculum plans securely match national curriculum requirements. You assert that plans show how key stage 3 pupils will acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in two years. However, you have had less opportunity to test this out. The disruptions to learning caused by COVID-19 have further reduced time for pupils to consolidate their knowledge, particularly for younger pupils. Leaders and governors need to assure themselves that the time given to teach subjects aligns with the time pupils need to learn them in full.

Leaders have enhanced support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You have increased the capacity and expertise of the SEND team. The SEND team meet on a weekly basis to review provision. Your special educational needs coordinator spends more time in classes to check how teachers are meeting pupils' needs in the classroom. While it is too early to assess the effects of these changes, there is stronger capacity for improvement.

You have made important changes to governance. The new chair of the governing body has a convincing understanding of school performance. He has reviewed school progress on a half-termly basis with senior advisers from the local authority. He has kept a watchful eye on how leaders meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Close scrutiny and increased challenge are supporting improvement. The local authority has recently reduced the intensity of its monitoring. This is because of the positive progress it believes the school is making.

The behaviour and attitudes of pupils was judged to be good at the last inspection. Despite this, there have been problems securing good levels of attendance. You have appointed an attendance officer. Barriers to attendance are being addressed. Although lower than you would like, there are signs that attendance is beginning to improve.

In discussions, the pupils I talked to felt safe. They know who to go to if they have concerns. They are confident that teachers will address any concerns they may share. Pupils believe senior leaders are more visible around the school site than they were before. They feel this supports positive behaviour from pupils.

Additional support

Through your involvement in the ONE Vision programme, you have invested heavily in staff's training and development. You have purchased resources to support the development of the curriculum. You have worked with a national leader of education to review improvement plans and actions.

You have worked with senior colleagues from the local authority. Subject leaders have developed their knowledge at subject network meetings. A local authority scrutiny group has met at regular intervals to check improvement. The local authority has carried out an audit of support for pupils with SEND. This has informed your improvement planning. Your leadership adviser continues to work with you and your team to check the effect of improvement actions.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team, subject leaders with responsibility for art, geography, mathematics and science and the SEND support team to discuss the actions taken to improve the school since the last inspection. I undertook lesson visits in English, mathematics, science and French. I also discussed attendance and aspects of safeguarding. I met groups of pupils in Years 8 and 10 to discuss behaviour, safety and the curriculum. I held a remote discussion with the chair of the governing body. I also held a remote discussion with your local authority leadership adviser. I looked at improvement plans and other documentation.

I considered 63 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 125 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 20 free-text responses.

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

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector