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Andrew Deen
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Dear Mr Deen

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Landau Forte Academy, Amington

Following my visit to your school on 14 July 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 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school 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 teachers consistently follow the school's assessment policy to help pupils identify errors and misconceptions in their work

- provide more opportunities for teachers to develop their knowledge of how to teach their subject, to further strengthen the curriculum.

Context

You were appointed as principal in July 2019. Since that time, you have strengthened your leadership team with the appointment of a vice principal and two assistant principals. A new chair of governors was appointed in June 2021.

At the time of this inspection, you had four members of staff who were self-isolating. Pupils in Year 9 and other close contacts were also self-isolating due to positive cases of COVID-19.

Main findings

The principal, together with other leaders, has taken swift and decisive action to move the school forward. A new curriculum has been put in place and work to improve other areas of the school has been successful.

Leaders have a clear vision for the school's curriculum. They have used educational research and best practice from other schools to help shape their curriculum design. Leaders have constructed a curriculum which fits with the local community and looks to raise the aspirations of pupils.

You ensure that staff training focuses on the school's key priorities. Staff receive regular training on the school's curriculum and how to implement this effectively in the classroom. Leaders have created a programme of training which looks to develop staff at all levels of the school. However, leaders are aware that teachers would benefit from further training. This will help teachers better understand how to teach their subject.

Leaders have worked hard to improve other aspects of the school's work. A new behaviour policy has been introduced which focuses on key behaviour principles. This is helping to promote a calm environment where pupils feel safe and happy. Attendance has also improved. Leaders have clear systems in place to check attendance and have continued to ensure pupils attend remote lessons regularly. Consequently, you have been able to continue with the delivery of your new curriculum during periods where pupils are self-isolating.

You have acted quickly following the additional monitoring inspection to improve the local governing body. A new chair of governors has been appointed who has a clear understanding of his delegated duties from the trust. He is already starting to provide more effective support and challenge to help move the school forward.

Leaders have improved the English curriculum. The subject leader has constructed an ambitious curriculum which ensures topics are carefully sequenced so that pupils build on their knowledge over time. Pupils are given regular opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing and learn new vocabulary. Teachers develop pupils' understanding of themes and concepts as they learn new texts. For example, the theme of conflict is explored in different years, including key stage 4 when pupils study Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. Teachers also use questioning skilfully to help pupils recall prior learning and check their understanding of new content. As a result, pupils are making better progress in English.

The curriculum has also improved in mathematics. Topics are logically sequenced and there are regular opportunities for pupils to recall what they have learned previously. The subject leader has worked hard to ensure lessons are carefully structured to help pupils develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. Checks on what pupils know and remember have also improved. In Year 7, teachers identified quickly that pupils arrived in school with gaps in their use of statistics and data. As a result, teachers adapted their lessons so that pupils had more teaching time on this topic. Recent assessments indicate that pupils are performing better in these areas.

You recognise that there is still further work to do to improve the wider curriculum. Leaders have introduced 'do now tasks' at the start of lessons. This is helping pupils to remember more over time. However, in some subjects, these tasks are too general and do not focus enough on the key knowledge or concepts that teachers want pupils to remember to help them build on what they already know.

There are also some inconsistencies in the way learning is checked. In some subjects, teachers do not always follow the school assessment policy by ensuring pupils check their work regularly. This can sometimes lead to errors and misconceptions not being spotted quickly enough. Pupils do not always complete the school's 'challenge tasks'. They therefore do not have an opportunity to further extend their knowledge and understanding.

Additional support

Leaders receive effective support and challenge from the trust. Regular meetings take place between the chief executive officer and the principal to discuss the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school is benefiting from the work of a school improvement partner who attends each week to provide support to school leaders. The trust has been keen to support leaders' well-being during the pandemic and ensure their focus has remained on the school's areas for improvement.

The school has also been supported by an external consultant to look at pupil attitudes. They have worked collaboratively with the pastoral team to implement new

behaviour principles and provide an oversight of the school's work to improve behaviour and attitudes.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the principal, other senior leaders, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer, pupils, staff and representatives of those responsible for governance, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I also looked at curriculum plans and information on the school's website. I evaluated responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 143 free-text responses and 61 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Landau Forte Charitable multi academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Howes
Her Majesty's Inspector