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Russell Bond
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Dear Mr Bond

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oxted School

Following my visit with Elizabeth Jeanes, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 6 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 a judgement of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspection.

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

- develop the planning of subject knowledge across Years 7 to 9 so that pupils learn all subjects in the key stage 3 curriculum in sufficient depth.

Context

You joined the school in January 2019. There have been other additions to the leadership team since the previous inspection in May 2018. An executive headteacher was appointed, a new deputy headteacher, two new assistant headteachers and a new special educational needs coordinator have been appointed. All governors, apart from two, have been appointed since the previous inspection, including the chair and vice-chair of governors.

Main findings

Together with senior leaders, governors and trustees, you have taken decisive action to make the changes that are needed. Staff share your high ambitions and are motivated to make further improvements. You accurately identified where your plans needed to change in order to address the disruption to learning caused by the national pandemic.

Teachers have better subject knowledge which they use to help pupils understand new knowledge more effectively. Pupils work more productively. For example, in the lessons we visited, pupils readily took part in debates and enjoyed using these discussions to further their understanding. Although leaders have taken steps to widen the curriculum, there is still more work to do to ensure that pupils in Years 7 to 9 build up sufficiently deep knowledge across the whole range of subjects. For example, in history, pupils study a wide range of topics. However, pupils get too few opportunities to develop a deep understanding.

You have ensured that there is a shared understanding across your leadership team of the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils may experience. You have introduced strategies designed to remove these hurdles. Teachers are now more confident in addressing the needs of disadvantaged pupils.

Teachers have a better-developed understanding of what pupils remember and pupils are focusing more on how to improve their work. This is because you have introduced a new approach to assessing pupils' work. However, the assessment policy is not yet consistently applied across all subjects.

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities by closely monitoring pupils' progress through the curriculum. Pupils that need extra help are supported by a range of well-considered interventions. Leaders work closely with local primary schools so that pupils coming into Year 7 get the help they need as soon as they start at Oxted School.

You decided that pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 were no longer required to attend school after the summer half-term holiday because they had finished their examinations. You explained that you have provided optional remote learning for

students in Year 13 and pupils in Year 11 in order to prepare them for going on to the next stage of their education.

Your communication with parents is improving. You and your team have prioritised engaging parents more in school life. For example, the parent 'council' has proved popular and parents appreciate the opportunity to be more involved in leaders' decisions. More parents have a positive view of the school and the changes you have put in place.

Additional support

The trust has supported leaders in making the necessary improvements in the school. This support includes monitoring the effectiveness of leaders' actions and holding leaders to account regularly. The trust has also ensured that the school has the necessary financial resources to increase the numbers of staff in leadership positions.

Evidence

During the inspection, we met with you, other senior leaders, staff, governors, a representative from the local authority, the chair of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Howard Partnership Trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement plan. We visited lessons with senior leaders to observe learning and met with two groups of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Harry Ingham
Her Majesty's Inspector