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Dear Mr Smith

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Thomas Bennett Community College

Following my visit to your school on 08 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 three 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:

- continue to monitor the implementation of the curriculum so that all pupils know more and remember more.

Context

Since the previous section 5 inspection there have been changes to staffing, including the appointment of an education welfare officer and an inclusion manager. There also have other changes at middle leadership level of the school.

An external review of governance has taken place and additional members have joined the local governing body.

At the time of this inspection Year 11 and Year 13 had formally left the school having completed their courses.

Main findings

Since the last section 5 inspection you have made rapid improvements to ensure that you are providing pupils with a broad and ambitious curriculum. In September 2020, you began to implement curriculum plans that clearly outline the knowledge and skills pupils should learn. In some subjects, for example personal, social and health education, you have carefully considered what knowledge pupils need to make informed decisions about how to stay safe.

Pupils can clearly and confidently talk about what they have enjoyed learning across a range of subjects. This includes prohibition in history and climate change in geography. However, you have not yet been successful in ensuring that pupils retain important knowledge in all subjects. You have plans in place to ensure that all curriculum subjects will provide pupils with opportunities to revisit their learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are accessing an ambitious curriculum. School staff are confidently using the pupil passports to provide support to pupils, that meet their individual needs. The passport design indicates the importance you and your staff place on collaborating with pupils and parents.

You have a clear focus on making sure that every pupil, regardless of their starting point, can read with confidence. Pupils enjoy opportunities to read across the curriculum, as well as dedicated time to read during morning registration. The needs of weaker readers are identified quickly. These pupils benefit from additional support that is helping them to access all areas of the curriculum. Beyond reading, you have also worked swiftly to ensure that curriculum subjects provide extended writing opportunities.

You are resolute in your drive to improve attendance, although the pandemic has hindered the progress of some planned interventions. You have put in place a clear process for identifying and supporting pupils who do not attend regularly. You work closely with the education welfare officer when this is needed. Pupils also benefit from individualised support from a broad range of specialist learning support

services. This is provided by highly trained staff who have a comprehensive understanding of pupils and their families.

Governors have worked with the trust to improve their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. For example, governors have been asking more specific questions when working with subject leaders, which has improved the support and challenge governors are providing.

Additional support

You have worked closely with the trust to provide staff with appropriate training and support. This has been carefully focused on the areas for school improvement, including curriculum development across all subjects. Your subject leaders value the subject networks across the trust. These have helped subject leaders to check their knowledge and develop their curriculum areas.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, representatives from the multi-academy trust, staff and the chair of the local governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also spoke to pupils with their workbooks, visited a number of lessons and visited the school's on-site inclusion provision. I reviewed information on the school's website and considered a range of documentation provided by school leaders. I considered the views of 89 parents through Ofsted's Parent View online survey, including 12 written comments. I also took into account the views of staff through conversations and the 73 responses to the online staff survey.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Kemnal Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Hanna Miller
Her Majesty's Inspector