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Andrew Parry
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Dear Mr Parry

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hylands 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 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.

Context

Since the previous inspection, three members of the senior leadership team have left. Following this, you restructured the leadership team, and some leaders changed their roles and responsibilities. There is now an 'extended leadership' team in place

consisting of experienced middle leaders, who were already in post within the school. A new governor has joined the governing body.

Main findings

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, you have ensured that the focus has been on addressing the areas requiring improvement from the previous section 5 inspection.

Leaders prioritise reading. All pupils, including students in the sixth form, are reading more often. This is ensuring pupils can access all areas of the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to read a wide range of texts to further extend their understanding of what they read. This is helping pupils learn and remember more complex vocabulary that pupils are beginning to use in their own writing. There is extra support provided for those pupils who struggle with reading. This is helping increase pupils' confidence to be able to use their reading skills in other curriculum subjects.

You introduced the 'Hyland Habits' to raise everyone's expectations. Pupils and staff report that attitudes towards learning and behaviour in lessons have improved. I observed a positive, calm, and orderly learning environment. Staff understand the reviewed behaviour systems that are now in place. They also appreciate leaders' support in managing behaviour. Staff are applying the behaviour system more consistently. As a result, there is little disruption to pupils' learning. Where there is any weaker behaviour this is usually because teachers are not clear enough in their instructions and explanations about what they want pupils to do.

Previously, the curriculum was not challenging enough for pupils. Leaders have reviewed curriculum plans to make sure that there is more challenge for pupils in all subjects. For example, within the history curriculum, teachers expect pupils to understand how to use evidence to make comparisons between different events. Pupils are encouraged to use what they know to explain historical events. This is raising aspirations of pupils. Consequently, an increased number of pupils are now applying for a place at the school's sixth form.

There were inconsistencies in the quality of education at the time of the previous section 5 inspection. Leaders are closely checking what is happening in lessons. While this work is confirming that inconsistencies have reduced, there are still some teachers who do not routinely check if pupils have remembered the important subject knowledge they have been taught. This results in some pupils struggling to use what they have learned previously to learn new content. Leaders are aware of this and there are plans to provide further training to support staff.

You are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have improved the systems for identifying pupils with SEND and for planning how they will be supported best. Leaders have provided training for

staff to help them adapt their planning so pupils with SEND can access all areas of the curriculum. While this is the case, there remains some inconsistency in the quality of support pupils with SEND receive. As a result, when this happens, pupils with SEND do not always achieve as well as they could. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is aware of this and there are plans in place to further improve this.

Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They make sure they know what is happening in the school. Governors provide appropriate support. They also provide robust challenge about the improvements being made in the quality of education.

Your improvement plans are suitable in helping the school to improve. You have accurately identified the actions needed to improve further.

Additional support

Trust leaders provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. This has helped leaders to improve the curriculum, leadership and check the accuracy of assessment. Teachers value the support from the trust's teaching and learning coach. Teachers say this is helping them to improve.

Staff value the opportunities to meet and work with other colleagues within the trust. These networks are helping your staff to feel more confident in their work.

The local authority school improvement partner (SIP) knows the school well. Leaders have received support from the SIP. As a result, leaders have refined their systems for checking how well the curriculum is being implemented and this is supporting leaders to improve the quality of education.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, representatives from the trust, pupils, staff, governors, and the local authority SIP to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I reviewed 45 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 40 free-texts from parents. I also took account of replies from 33 staff questionnaire responses.

I visited lessons and reviewed a range of documentation, including your evaluation of the school's provision, improvement plans and minutes of the governing body.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Kemnal Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the

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director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Maureen Su
Her Majesty's Inspector