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Rebecca Staples
Principal
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Dear Ms Staples

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dinnington High School

Following my visit to your school on 8 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 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:

- ensure that curriculum plans clearly identify the most important knowledge that pupils should learn in each subject and in each year group
- ensure that the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is at least as broad and ambitious as the national curriculum.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection, there have been significant leadership and staff changes. There is a new chair of the governing body and five new governors. The trust has appointed additional leadership roles with the aim of accelerating the school's improvement. These include three new pastoral leaders and an assistant special educational needs coordinator (SENCo).

Main findings

Despite some delays as a result of the pandemic, leaders have taken action to improve the school. More recently, the pace of improvement has gathered momentum. You have raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Leaders and staff share your vision and sense of urgency to improve the school. The impact of this work has been recognised by pupils, parents and staff. Parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View survey were overwhelmingly positive. One commented, typical of many: 'I wouldn't want my child to go anywhere else, thank you to all the staff.'

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that the key stage 3 curriculum is at least as broad and ambitious as the national curriculum. You and other leaders have reviewed the curriculum at key stage 3. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 now study a broader range of subjects. However, pupils in Year 9 study a range of option choice subjects, and across Years 7 to 9 the subject knowledge that pupils learn still does not match the breadth of the national curriculum. You have planned further work to address this priority.

In some subjects, such as science and modern foreign languages (MFL), curriculum leaders have identified the crucial knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember. However, the curriculum is still underdeveloped in some subjects, such as design and technology. There is still more work to do to ensure that teachers have a clear picture of what pupils must learn over time in these subjects. You have plans in place to provide curriculum leaders with additional support to strengthen curriculum planning.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that all teachers receive precise information about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The support for pupils with SEND has improved. The SENCo has implemented clear systems so that pupils with SEND are identified swiftly. New 'pupil passports' provide teachers with the precise information that they need so that they know how to support pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND are receiving better support, which is enabling them to access the curriculum.

Since the previous inspection, you have taken action to improve the school's reading curriculum. Recently, you have implemented a new reading programme to support the weakest readers. Staff who deliver the school's reading programme are well

trained to teach reading. Pupils who need help with reading receive intensive support. The programme is well delivered. As a result, more pupils are becoming more confident readers.

You have ensured that the school's new behaviour policy is applied more consistently by all staff. You continue to raise staff's expectations of all pupils. Pupils know what is expected of them and others. Pupils appreciate the changes to the behaviour policy because they can see it is making a difference.

Leaders have placed a greater focus on improving pupils' attendance. You have increased staffing to the school's pastoral team. Leaders have introduced a rigorous system for checking and monitoring pupils' attendance. Staff engage well with parents when pupils' attendance starts to decline. Relationships with families have strengthened. Pupils' attendance is improving.

Governors and trust leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors are now much clearer about their roles and responsibilities. They have received a wide range of training. This is helping them to hold school leaders to account. Minutes from governors' meetings demonstrate that they ask appropriately challenging questions of school leaders. This is contributing to bringing about rapid and sustained improvements.

Additional support

The trust has brokered the support of a national leader of education and external consultants to develop middle leadership and improve the school's curriculum. You have used the support from the trust well to bring about the necessary improvements. For example, curriculum leaders for science and MFL have worked successfully with an external consultant to improve their curriculum plans. The trust SEND leader has supported the school's SENCo to improve the provision for pupils with SEND.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, the chief executive officer of the trust, staff, pupils and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I reviewed the school development plan, the school self-evaluation document, minutes from governors' meetings and curriculum plans. I also reviewed the checks that are made on the suitability of adults to work with children. I considered 88 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 33 free-text responses, and 53 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of Learner Achievement and Engagement multi-academy trust, the regional

schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rotherham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Jean Watt
Her Majesty's Inspector