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Helena Marsh
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Dear Mrs Marsh

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Linton Village College

Following my visit to your school on 13 July 2021 with Damian Loneragan, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), 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. 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 leaders:

- embed the new curriculum plans and recent improvements to special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) practice to provide a consistently strong quality of education for all pupils across all year groups
- strengthen communication with parents so that they fully understand leaders' plans for improving the school.

Context

Linton Village College joined a new multi-academy trust, Anglian Learning, on 1 April 2020. Two new assistant principals, a new director of inclusion and three new subject leaders were appointed in September 2020. A new chair of the local governing body and a new chair of the standards committee were appointed in January 2021.

The disbanding of the Chilford Hundred Education Trust, and the college's teaching school, CASSA (the Cambridge & Suffolk Schools Alliance) and associated initiatives have enabled the college's senior leadership team to focus on school operations and improvements.

Main findings

The impact of leaders and managers at all levels continues to improve. They are realistic about what still needs to be done. There is a determined approach to building sustainable foundations for the longer term.

Middle leaders are increasingly effective and feel that they have made 'huge strides forward'. They are well supported by senior leaders. Leaders have thought carefully about the important knowledge that pupils should learn in each of the subject areas and the order in which to teach it. Pupils told us they understood the new knowledge taught in lessons. Pupils could articulate what they were learning and why. They used subject vocabulary well in English and religious studies to explain key concepts. Although improvement is evident, the planned curriculum is not yet delivered consistently across all subject areas.

Provision for pupils with SEND has improved. The special educational needs coordinator provides useful information for teachers, which they include in their planning. The use of learning support assistants to support pupils with SEND is now more effective and consistent. While the communication with parents of pupils with SEND is improving, there is still more work to do. Many strategies are new and have not yet had time to embed.

We spoke with pupils, in all year groups, during the inspection. Almost all told us that they feel safe in the school. Pupils said that bullying was rare and that if it did

happen, they would trust staff to sort out their issues. One pupil's view, that the school 'is really inclusive and welcoming,' was representative of others.

School leaders have recently reviewed the school's behaviour policy and have taken action to increase the consistency with which staff respond to poor behaviour. Pupils say some low-level disruption of lessons remains, but its occurrence is reducing. On the day of the inspection, pupils conducted themselves well in lessons and around the school site.

Leaders have raised the profile of the importance of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Staff are trained well to teach the subject. Pupils say PSHE has helped them understand about relationships, British values and how they can promote their mental and physical well-being. Pupils have access to counselling and other external support agencies. Leaders have consulted with parents about the relationships, sex and health education curriculum and have taken into consideration their feedback.

Pupils learn about their rights and responsibilities in society. They talk about how, in their school, they accept everyone for who they are. Pupils are taught that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable. They told us they would share any concerns they have with an adult in the school.

Leaders use the safeguarding guidance appropriately. Staff are vigilant at spotting and identifying issues of concern. When concerns are reported to adults, they are recorded suitably. The system for staff to report concerns is thorough. Records are detailed. Leaders review how well they are safeguarding pupils and involve the right statutory agencies at the right time. They have recently reviewed their processes to ensure that they also involve families, where appropriate, at the earliest opportunity.

Governors are determined to provide pupils with the best quality education and care. They know the school well and focus on those areas that need to improve. Governors are now providing more rigorous and searching challenge on the impact of school leaders' decisions.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They speak positively about the training that they receive from leaders. Most say leaders are considerate of their well-being. They say leaders do help when staff workload is high but do not always consider 'pinch points' in workload. While a number of parents are supportive, leaders have not yet gained the full support of parents in what they are trying to achieve. Some parents do not always understand leaders' intentions. Some parents feel that communication regarding school improvement could be better.

Additional support

The trust's support and challenge have been central in helping senior leaders to focus on school improvement. The school has built partnerships with other

secondary schools in the trust to share best practice. Membership of trust-wide leadership networks has created opportunities for peer learning and professional development. There is still more to do in order to improve the school. Nonetheless, focused leadership from the top is starting to transform the school for the better.

Evidence

During the inspection, we held meetings with the principal, other senior leaders, middle leaders, the deputy chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, pupils, staff and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

We walked around the school with a senior leader to view how effectively leaders promote good behaviour and carried out visits to lessons. We looked at the safeguarding and child protection policies, improvement plans and leaders' self-evaluation, alongside other information.

We considered 389 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. We also considered 70 free-text responses, 81 staff questionnaire responses and one telephone conversation with a parent.

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

Yours sincerely

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop
Her Majesty's Inspector