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Gemma Simon
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Dear Mrs Simon

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tamworth Enterprise College and AET Academy

Following my visit to your school on 6 October 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 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing 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:

- develop pupils' love of reading so that they read widely and often
- ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not overly repeating work, but instead learn the full ambitious curriculum in all subjects.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant staff changes. In September 2019, you were appointed as executive principal. A new chair of the governing body was elected at this time.

In the 12 months that followed, you appointed a new leadership team. An extended leadership team was created in September 2020. This included the appointment of lead teachers in English and mathematics. The current special educational needs coordinator was appointed in September 2019.

At the beginning of the current academic year, several new teaching staff joined the school in a range of subjects. This is because some staff have left, but also because you were able to recruit additional teaching staff to strengthen the school. At the time of the inspection, the school was fully staffed.

COVID-19 has delayed the implementation of the new systems aimed at improving pupils' behaviour; however, these have now been introduced. It has also delayed leaders' work in improving literacy across the curriculum.

Main findings

You and the leadership team are taking the fundamental actions needed to improve the school. You are taking the right steps, in the right order, at the right time. Leaders understand how the school has improved and where they need to improve further. Collectively, staff are making quick and effective progress. Leaders' plans focus on the right things and reflect a collective ambition for the school. Staff and pupils share this ambition. Pupils can see how the school has got better.

Leaders made improving the curriculum their highest priority. They have worked hard to develop curriculum plans that are coherent and well sequenced. Their work has been effective. Each subject has a 'big picture' of what pupils will learn, underpinned by detailed plans. Leaders have thought meticulously about how pupils' new learning builds on what they have learned before. For instance, in history, pupils draw on their knowledge of 'empire' from the Aztecs when learning about the British Empire. As a result, pupils can see how their learning is linked. This helps them remember the important information from their lessons.

As well as thinking about what pupils will learn, leaders have thought about how pupils will learn it. You have introduced some whole-school approaches, but leaders have adjusted these in each subject to make them work well. For instance, all subjects have introduced 'green sheets'. These are questions designed to help pupils review what they have learned. However, there is no prescribed approach to how subjects design and use these. In mathematics, leaders have carefully chosen multiple choice questions that help identify pupils' misconceptions. Teachers and pupils use these well. Consequently, teachers better understand what pupils know and remember.

Staff are ambitious for pupils with SEND. Leaders expect pupils with SEND to learn the same curriculum as other pupils. However, this is not consistently so. In a small number of lessons, rather than being supported to learn the curriculum, pupils with SEND are revisiting learning that they already know well.

Leaders' actions to improve pupils' behaviour are effective. Pupils know and understand the rebranded school values of 'respect, relationships and responsibility'. These have quickly become part of the school culture. Leaders are teaching pupils about good behaviour through a well-thought-out programme. They are focusing on improving behaviour rather than simply punishing pupils. Pupils say that behaviour has improved. They are correct. If pupils' behaviour falls below the level expected, staff work with them to help them put it right. Leaders know there is more to do to support a small number of pupils that need extra help to improve their behaviour. They know how they will do this, and this work is well underway.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They are proud of their school. Staff and pupils work together in an atmosphere of tolerance and kindness. Leaders have removed many of the barriers that could cause conflict and slow learning. For instance, by making sure all pupils have the equipment they need for lessons. Pupils trust their teachers to treat them fairly and with respect. Staff celebrate pupils' success. As a result, classrooms are increasingly calm and settled. Pupils' want to learn and can learn.

Since the last full inspection, leaders have acted swiftly to make sure that pupils attend school well. COVID-19 has challenged leaders further in this regard. Leaders are working with pupils and their families on an individual basis when they identify issues. More widely, all staff continue to promote the importance of pupils' attendance. This is a collective effort. As a result, pupils are attending well.

Before the pandemic, leaders were working to make sure that literacy and reading were prominent in curriculum plans. Your current plans reflect the importance of continuing this work. Leaders have identified the need for all pupils to read widely and often so that they develop a love for literature. You rightly recognise that there is much to do to bring this to fruition.

Many staff are relatively new to the teaching profession or subject leadership. You have made sure that staff induction and training are well planned. Subject teachers have time to discuss how to teach the curriculum. A network of teachers from across the multi-academy trust provide support to them. Staff feel valued and trusted. As a result, they are flourishing as they grow into their roles.

Additional support

The multi-academy trust has been effective in supporting curriculum improvements. You have made good use of expertise from schools within the trust. Curriculum leaders are part of wider subject networks and they benefit from this support. They draw on others'

knowledge and apply this well to the context of the school and its pupils. As a result, the rate of curriculum improvement has accelerated.

The local governing body provides a high degree of scrutiny and expertise. It is clear about its delegated duties from the multi-academy trust.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and the head of school. I also met with other senior leaders, multi-academy trust representatives, members of the local governing body, staff and pupils to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I also visited lessons and held meetings with subject leaders to discuss curriculum plans. I looked at information on the school's website.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Tustian
Her Majesty's Inspector