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Mark Brown
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Dear Mr Brown

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Winifred Holtby Academy

Following my visit to your school on 24 September 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:

- finalise the establishment and embedding of the reorganised governing body so that support and challenge for leaders are fully in place and effective

- work with the chief executive officer (CEO) of the multi-academy trust (MAT) to implement the trust's quality assurance process for school improvement
- strengthen the school improvement plan further, so that it contains checks along the way towards the completion of actions, and more precise sub-actions within overarching actions, to enable governors to hold leaders to account effectively.

Context

You spoke to me about the impact of COVID-19 on the school. During the pandemic, there were many instances of pupil and staff self-isolation. You have made some changes to your curriculum plans as a result of the disruption caused by the pandemic, so that any gaps in pupils' learning can be identified and addressed.

Since the most recent section 5 inspection, the school joined The Consortium Academy Trust. A new CEO has very recently joined the MAT.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you have reviewed your curriculum offer and introduced a new curriculum. For example, you have reintroduced a three-year key stage 3 curriculum. You have revised your key stage 4 curriculum by adding vocational subjects like engineering and travel and tourism to pupils' options. This better matches the subjects available to pupils to careers in the local economy. You have heightened the focus on English baccalaureate subjects such as modern foreign languages, history and geography, to raise pupils' aspirations.

In addition, you have acted to introduce new curriculums for some of your most vulnerable pupils. At times working in partnership with the special school on the same site, the curriculums for these pupils are ambitious in scope, and provide appropriate next-step opportunities for when the pupils progress to post-16 education.

You explained to me how you have started working more closely with local primary schools than previously, because you wanted your subject leaders to better understand the key stage 1 and 2 programmes of study. There have been two particular results of this work. One of them is the development of your mathematics curriculum, and the second is the development of your reading curriculum.

In mathematics, which was highlighted in one of the areas for improvement at the previous inspection, you have introduced a commercially available scheme of work, which is also used in a number of your partner primary schools. In discussion with subject leaders, it was clear that they understand the rationale for this choice of scheme. Visits to lessons, pupils' work and discussions with pupils and teachers showed that the mathematics curriculum is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. For example, you have organised your groups so that pupils receive work that is tailored to their mathematics needs. It was evident that teachers make effective use of assessment in

mathematics to identify how well pupils are grasping the content and skills which are being taught.

You have acted with purpose to respond to the recommendation about developing reading made during the remote monitoring visit in February 2021. Reading features strongly in your school improvement plan. You have been working closely with a primary school from the MAT to support you in the introduction of a system of synthetic phonics. This is to help the weakest readers in Year 7 become confident and fluent readers. Alongside this, you have introduced a school-wide policy of improving pupils' subject-specific vocabulary. In each of the lessons I visited, this was evident. Pupils spoke positively about how 'disciplinary vocabulary' is helping them with their understanding of subject content.

We explored the school's use of assessment, another of the areas for improvement at the previous inspection. You feel that the experience of delivering remote and blended learning during the pandemic has sharpened teachers' use of assessment to identify gaps in pupils' learning. During lesson visits, across a range of subjects, it was evident that staff had a good understanding of pupils' grasp of subject content, and subject skills. I saw this, for instance, in music, Spanish, science, history and geography.

We also explored the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One of the changes you have made since the previous inspection has been the introduction of 'nurture' groups in Years 7 to 11, with specific teaching assistants working within these groups across the timetable. In a visit to a lesson of one of the groups, it was clear that staff were ambitious for pupils, and that they were calling on pupils to draw on their prior learning to answer questions. Information shared by the coordinator for pupils with SEND showed that leaders have a strong grip on the various 'provision maps' in place for pupils with SEND. Evidence was seen in lesson visits of how teachers and teaching assistants make use of such information in their teaching of, and support for, pupils with SEND.

The pandemic has slowed the work you had started with your chair of governors to establish a largely new governing body. However, supported by the CEO of the trust, this work is back on track. New members of the governing body have appropriate experience and skills to bring to bear. The chair of governors has a strong understanding of what needs to be done to support and challenge leaders towards the school becoming good.

You have written a succinct strategic improvement plan to help the school become a good school. The plan is based on the areas for improvement which were identified at the most recent section 5 inspection. The plan sets out some specific actions which you intend to take, and in many cases are already undertaking. A substantial number of actions relate to the curriculum, to teaching and to reading. Responsibility for each action is assigned to a named member of the senior leadership team, which will support effective monitoring of progress towards achieving the respective action. You have set out how you will measure the impact of the actions taken and when you expect to complete them. The plan would benefit, however, from the inclusion of some checks or milestones along the way towards

completing an action, so that governors and the CEO are able to monitor and evaluate how things are going. It would also strengthen the plan further if the overarching actions are broken down into more specific sub-actions, to better enable precise planning and monitoring.

Additional support

You have received, and continue to receive, support from the MAT. In addition to the support for your mathematics, reading and literacy strategies as described above, the trust has supported you in reviewing the quality of education. For example, the trust has worked with you in the development of teaching through the use of 'deep dive' methodology.

The new CEO has started to work alongside you in the implementation of a trust-wide quality assurance process, so that leaders can be held to account and supported as the school moves to becoming good. This was in its infancy at the point of inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the headteacher. I also met with other senior leaders and the CEO of the MAT, pupils, staff and the chair of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I also met with leaders for mathematics and for SEND. I visited lessons in a range of subjects and looked at pupils' work. I scrutinised a number of school documents, including leaders' plans for improving the school and minutes of a governors' meeting.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Consortium Academy multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kingston Upon Hull City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Shaw
Her Majesty's Inspector