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Janette Vincent
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Vincent

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Childwall Sports & Science Academy

Following my visit to your school on 19 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 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:

- ensure that curriculum plans in those subjects that require further development are carefully sequenced to support teachers in designing learning that helps pupils to build on what they already know.

Context

Since the last routine section 8 monitoring inspection in October 2019, three new governors have joined the academy governance committee (AGC). A new deputy headteacher has joined the school. Three new subject leaders have been appointed. An assistant subject leader and a number of teachers have also joined the school.

Main findings

You have acted to strengthen leadership across the school. You, trustees, governors and other leaders have taken appropriate steps to bring about the necessary improvements to the school. You, alongside other leaders, continue to refine your improvement plans, ensuring that you accurately identify those areas that need the most attention. Leaders check regularly to make sure their actions are bringing about developments at the pace required.

Leaders have ensured that the school's curriculum is ambitious for all pupils and students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils in key stage 4 benefit from a broader, more academic curriculum. For example, more pupils are now choosing to study Spanish, history and geography at GCSE than before. Leaders are developing appropriate strategies to keep parents and carers informed about what pupils and students are learning.

In the sixth form, leaders have improved the suitability of courses to better meet students' needs and interests. Students are positive about their learning. They appreciate the appropriate advice and guidance that they receive about their next steps. Students' rates of attendance in the sixth form are improving. More students complete their courses than they did previously.

Subject leaders have worked with the trust and local schools to develop curriculum plans that outline what pupils and students need to learn and when. In many subjects, such as mathematics, history and science, these plans are designed to help pupils and students to build on what they already know and can do. For example, in geography, pupils build on their knowledge of plate tectonics when learning about volcanoes. However, in some subjects, curriculum plans do not outline clearly how pupils build on earlier learning as they move through the school. For instance, in Spanish, leaders' plans do not clarify how pupils' knowledge of grammar builds over time. This means that some pupils do not learn how to manipulate the language as well as they should.

Subject leaders and teachers are receiving training from the trust and other schools locally to help them to better deliver curriculum plans. In subjects where curriculum plans are well designed, this training is supporting teachers to select appropriate activities so that pupils, including those with SEND, build on earlier learning. For example, in mathematics, teachers help pupils to embed their knowledge of number facts and methods. Teachers across a range of subjects check on what pupils, including students in the sixth form, know and remember. Teachers use this information well to identify

mistakes and address misconceptions. However, where curriculum plans are less well structured, there are occasions when teachers do not choose activities that help pupils to build on earlier learning.

Through regular reading lessons, pupils in Years 7 to 11 develop their vocabulary and comprehension skills. Leaders ensure that staff receive increasingly detailed information to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers are beginning to use this information well to help these pupils to learn more and remember more. Pupils who spoke with me said that this support is helping them to access the curriculum more successfully.

Trustees and the AGC have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and those aspects that require further development. They monitor your work to improve the school closely. Members of the AGC provide effective challenge and support around leaders' work to improve the curriculum and decrease the number of pupils who are frequently absent from school. Staff who spoke to me said that they are proud to work in the school. They value your strong regard for their workload and well-being.

Additional support

You and school leaders have accessed support from within the trust to develop the curriculum. You have used this support to help subject leaders to develop and improve curriculum plans appropriately across a range of subjects. Teachers continue to benefit from subject-specific support from the trust to improve their skills in delivering the curriculum.

You and subject leaders have also appreciated the advice and support received from local schools and external advisers. You told me that you have found this support useful in helping you to identify school improvement priorities and make the necessary changes to curriculum plans.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. I met with groups of students and pupils. I met with the chief executive officer (CEO) for the trust, a group of trustees and representatives of the AGC to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.

I scrutinised a range of documents, including minutes of AGC meetings, leaders' improvement plans and subject curriculum plans. I also visited lessons in English, mathematics and science. I considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO of the Lydiate Learning Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Liverpool City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Linda Emmett
Her Majesty's Inspector