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Stuart Kay
Acting Principal
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Dear Mr Kay

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to South Wigston High School

Following my visit to your school on 10 February 2022, 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 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:

- urgently implement new plans to support and meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils across all year groups so that they behave well and achieve as well as they can
- ensure that all subject leaders further develop their curriculum planning to precisely identify the important knowledge pupils need to learn and when they need to learn it so

that pupils become more confident in applying their knowledge to the learning activities teachers set.

Context

South Wigston High School is smaller than the average-size secondary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is similar to the national average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

The school joined the Learning Without Limits Academy Trust in January 2021.

There have been recent changes to the leadership of the school. The previous principal left the school at the end of the autumn term. The trust acted swiftly to secure increased leadership capacity at the school. A new acting principal was appointed at the start of the spring term. An additional acting vice principal has been appointed with responsibility for the academic curriculum. An assistant principal has been seconded from the trust's lead school to oversee developments in improving the quality of teaching. The school has also appointed a new chair of the local governing body.

Main findings

The principal and senior leaders present a cohesive and unified team. Leaders have a clear vision for the school's future success. They are working rapidly to bring about the necessary improvements. Leaders have wasted no time in implementing a revitalised school improvement plan. The principal has redefined leadership roles and responsibilities. Lines of accountability are clear. Leaders' actions are beginning to change the academic and pastoral culture of the school. They are placing pupils' best interests at the heart of their improvement work. They have introduced the 'South Wigston CARES' (courageous, accepting, responsible, employable and successful) attributes to promote high expectations of everyone.

New leaders are realistic. They know that they are on a journey of school improvement. They realise that not everything can be improved immediately. Many of their new improvement plans are at an early stage of development. It is too soon to see their full impact. However, leaders have instilled a renewed sense of optimism about the future of the school. This is an optimism that staff share. They understand leaders' vision. Morale is positive. Relationships between staff and pupils are improving.

Leaders, including all subject leaders, are redeveloping the school's curriculum. They have decided to revert to a three-year key stage 3 curriculum structure. Leaders are reviewing the range of subjects offered at key stage 4. They are working to ensure that option subjects meet the aspirations of pupils. Subject leaders are receiving the support they need to develop subject plans. They are putting into place progressive 'learning journeys' from Years 7 to 11. Although at an early stage of redevelopment, these plans are

becoming more ambitious. Subject leaders are checking to ensure that their plans meet the requirements of the national curriculum. However, leaders' curriculum planning does not consistently ensure that all teachers know the important knowledge pupils need to learn, nor the order in which it should be taught. Leaders recognise the importance of this development priority.

Leaders' actions are beginning to improve teachers' ability to deliver the curriculum. They have put in place a well-researched training programme. Leaders have introduced the 'three E's' (engagement, excitement and enthusiasm) to improve teachers' planning of lessons. Expectations are higher than they have been in the past. Leaders are checking more regularly to ensure that the staff put the training they receive into practice.

Leaders recognise that recent improvements in teachers' delivery of the curriculum are at an early stage. Some teachers are adapting their teaching more quickly than others. Most teachers use questioning well to check pupils' understanding. In a mathematics lesson I visited, pupils responded enthusiastically to their teacher's questioning about number sequences. They understood the mathematical rules in operation. Pupils told me that they felt well supported. In a physical education lesson, pupils were responsive to their teacher's high expectations of them. They understood how and when they could improve their passing skills in football. However, the delivery of the curriculum is not always consistent. Sometimes, teachers assume pupils' prior knowledge. Sometimes, they set tasks that do not build on what pupils have learned before or prepare for what comes next. When this happens, pupils sometimes leave work unfinished or do not take part as well as they might.

Leaders ensure that all staff know about pupils with SEND. They share key information to help inform teachers' planning. Leaders are improving how they check that these pupils are making progress. However, leaders' actions to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, over time, have been too slow. Leaders have researched new approaches to support these pupils across all year groups in the school. They know that they need to act on these plans swiftly.

Leaders are prioritising pupils who need extra help to support their reading skills. Leaders have recruited new tutors to provide weaker readers with precise help in their use of phonics. Leaders are also developing a whole-school strategy to promote a love of reading. This, too, is at an early stage of development.

Previous inspection reports called on leaders to ensure that staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. Leaders are changing the school's approach to nurture an ethos of respectful relationships. They have reorganised pastoral staff to improve checks on pupils' behaviour in lessons. The proportion of pupils removed from lessons is beginning to reduce. Similarly, the proportion of pupils excluded from school is starting to decrease. During my visit, I observed the school environment to be mostly calm and orderly. Most pupils are polite and friendly. Most respond well to instructions. However, I did observe small pockets of boisterous behaviour during lunchtime and between lessons. A small number of pupils displayed low-level disruption in some of the lessons I visited. A

small number of pupils do not arrive at school as punctually as they should. Leaders have acted to address this.

Additional support

The trust acted swiftly to increase the leadership capacity at the school. Leaders have ensured that their improvement plans draw on expertise that exists in the trust and externally to the school. They have worked closely with leaders from other secondary schools to support their recent improvement work. Trust leaders have ensured tighter lines of accountability are in place between school leaders, trust leaders and local governance. Relationships between all strategic leaders are positive and are becoming increasingly productive.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the acting principal. I also met with other members of the senior leadership team to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with the subject leaders for mathematics and physical education. I also met with the subject coordinator for history. I visited nine lessons across a number of subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work during these visits. I spoke to pupils in lessons and around the school site. During lunchtime, I also spoke informally with supervising staff. I met with the chief executive officer of the trust and the chair of the local governing body remotely, along with the trust's director of education. I examined a range of documentation, including records relating to leaders' checks on the quality of education, curriculum planning and staff's training. I also reviewed the school's revised improvement plan and several policies, including behaviour management. I considered 61 responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online survey.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the Learning Without Limits Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector