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Dear Mrs Graham

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to West Derby School

Following my visit to your school on 12 May 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 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:

The school continues to require improvement. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action toward the school becoming a good school.

Leaders should take further action to:

- continue to build on the work already started to improve teachers' use of assessment strategies so that they can identify any misconceptions that pupils may have.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been some changes in leadership and staffing. Three new assistant headteachers and two joint leaders for sixth form have been appointed. The roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team have been reviewed and revised. In addition, there is a new faculty leader for humanities and new subject leaders for modern foreign languages and religious education (RE). A new chair of the board of trustees has taken up post.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic did have an impact on staffing, leaders continued with their actions to improve the school.

Main findings

You are determined that West Derby School will provide a good education for the school's pupils and students. Staff buy into your vision. They are proud to work at the school and their morale is high.

Although you were disappointed in the judgements made in the last inspection, you have wasted no time in updating and implementing the school improvement plan to tackle the areas for improvement. You have an accurate view of the school. There are clear signs of improvement in the quality of education across the school.

You have reviewed the whole-school curriculum structure and made a number of changes to ensure that all pupils receive a broad and ambitious curriculum. For example, you have increased the time devoted to geography, history and RE in key stage 3. This is helping pupils to learn these subjects in greater depth. You have also reviewed and developed the choice of subjects in key stage 4. All pupils now follow a course in RE. In addition, more pupils are studying a modern foreign language. This is increasing the proportion of pupils taking the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

You have worked closely with subject leaders to improve the design and delivery of subject curriculums from Year 7 to Year 13. Subject leaders have identified the key knowledge that they want pupils and students to learn. Pupils and students learn new knowledge in a logical order. Subject leaders appreciate the training and support that they have received from external consultants to develop their curriculums. Subject leaders ensure that their curriculums focus on developing subject-specific vocabulary. This helps pupils to understand key words so that they can talk about and explain their learning clearly and accurately.

Pupils and students appreciate the improvements in teaching, including in geography. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to revisit concepts and help pupils and students build on their prior learning.

You have recently revised the assessment systems in the school. Teachers are using assessment strategies more effectively. This is helping them to check that pupils and

students have learned the knowledge in the curriculum. However, teachers' checks on learning are not used as well as they could be to identify pupils' misconceptions and to plan for the next steps in pupils' learning.

You have developed effective strategies for the use of additional funding and you check on the impact that it is having on disadvantaged pupils' learning across the curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils also benefit from a range of visits. They are catching up with their peers.

You have raised the profile of reading across the school. Pupils who find reading more difficult are supported well by staff who have received training in phonics. This is helping these pupils to catch up with their reading knowledge. You have invested in new reading books which are encouraging pupils to read more widely and often. This is also helping them to develop their understanding of the wider world and respect for the differences between people. Pupils reported that they have regular opportunities to read in form time and that they enjoy reading.

Pupils in Year 11 benefit from stronger arrangements for careers advice and guidance than in the past. This is helping to improve students' retention and completion rates on academic courses in the sixth form. Students in the sixth form value the support that teachers provide with applications to education, employment and training, including apprenticeships. Many go on to study at university.

Trustees are committed to the school improving. They provide appropriate levels of support to leaders. Minutes of trust board meetings show that trustees ask probing questions to hold you and other leaders to account. Trustees know the school well.

Additional support

You value the support that you receive from the school improvement partners and external consultants commissioned by the local authority. You have used this support effectively to bring about improvements in the quality of education. You have also made effective use of the support provided by a local multi-academy trust and other local schools. This has aided school improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, two deputy headteachers, other senior leaders, subject leaders, staff, pupils and students in the sixth form. I also met with three trustees and a representative of the local authority. This was to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I discussed the curriculum with the subject leaders of geography, history and science. I also met with the leaders responsible for reading intervention. I visited a sample of lessons with a senior leader. I met with a group of pupils from Year 10 and students from Year 12 and 13 to discuss their experience of school life. I looked at samples of pupils'

work. I also observed pupils' and students' behaviour at breaktimes and throughout the school day. I spoke with pupils informally around the school. I examined a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and attendance records. I reviewed the school's safeguarding policies and checked the single central record on the suitability of staff to work with children.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector