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Ms Amy Anderson
Head of School
Meridian High School
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Dear Ms Anderson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Meridian High School

Following my visit to your school on 14 June 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 received a judgement of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspection.

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.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that, in all subjects, activities are planned consistently to build on what pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), know and understand

- ensure that pupils develop a love of reading
- improve attendance rates and reduce levels of persistent absence.

Context

COVID-19 did not have a substantial impact on your plans for improvement, other than slight delays in implementing improvements to the curriculum. However, you have found that many pupils have returned to school with significant gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. This is particularly evident in mathematics.

Following the last inspection in April 2019, the headteacher and other leaders left the school. The governing body has changed considerably but the chair of governors remains in post. The trust has secured the appointment of a head of school, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, including subject leaders. They are supported by an experienced part-time executive headteacher, trust directors and specialist staff.

Main findings

Supported by the trust and governors, you have ensured that leaders' ambition and high expectations are communicated well across all aspects of the school's work. You have established a process for improvement that prioritises the actions needed to become a good school. Plans are suitably focused on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

You recognise that there is still much more to do to ensure that the curriculum is consistently implemented across all subjects. The curriculum intent is clear, ambitious and systematically planned across the school. However, the sequencing of activities in some subjects does not build on pupils' prior knowledge, resulting in gaps in their understanding and key vocabulary.

Subject leaders receive extensive training to ensure a consistent application of curriculum policy. They report directly to a member of the senior leadership team. Lines of accountability and roles and responsibilities in securing improvement are clear. Frequent checks on pupils' knowledge and learning through observations in lessons and reviews of pupils' work are helping to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses in provision. Work with other trust schools and subject specialists is ensuring that good practice is shared.

Training for all staff is ensuring a greater consistency of approach especially in the use of regular assessment to assist planning. However, this work is still embedding in some subjects. For some pupils, therefore, including those with SEND, work is not carefully adapted to meet their needs so they learn and remember more.

Leaders check for gaps in pupils' literacy skills so that interventions can be tailored more precisely to meet individual needs. Reading standards, often from low starting points, are improving. However, a love of reading and reading more widely for pleasure is not firmly established among pupils across the school.

You have taken necessary and decisive action to improve pupils' behaviour. Policies and procedures have been improved. Staff told me that leaders are supportive and ensure a consistent application of behaviour plans and rewards for pupils who make positive behaviour choices. Many staff and pupils report a positive change in the culture of the school.

Pupils I spoke to could explain the behaviour policy to me in some detail. They agreed with the staff's view that behaviour has improved because of the changes that you have introduced. Pupils commented on the effective one-to-one support, counselling and the THRIVE programme to support vulnerable pupils. These and other strategies, as your own records show, have resulted in a reduction of incidents of poor behaviour and internal exclusions.

Too many pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. This continues to be a priority following the pandemic which adversely affected attendance rates. Persistent absence remains too high. Together with other senior leaders, governors and the trust, with the support of the local authority, you have sustained a relentless focus on improving attendance. A priority has been to improve the relationship with parents and carers and build on the improvements made during the pandemic. You aim to work in partnership with parents and families to improve attendance. There are some signs of success with some families and pupils. However, there is still work to be done to secure improved attendance.

Safeguarding systems and procedures have been improved considerably. Staff are vigilant about safeguarding concerns and timely interventions to support pupils and referrals to appropriate agencies are made as necessary. There is a high staff presence during lunch times and the end of the school day. Staff maintain effective links with external agencies, including the police, health professionals and children's services.

School leaders take any complaints about safeguarding very seriously. The school's records and the local authority's investigations show that due processes are followed. Governor oversight is rigorous.

Additional support

Support from the trust has had a positive impact. Trust leaders, including the part-time executive headteacher, appointed since the last inspection, have provided skilled and experienced direction for the school. Subject and school improvement specialists from the trust and other providers are supporting improvements in the curriculum. The local authority provides additional support through, for example, home visits and close working

with your attendance team. Shared good practice from other schools in the trust is helping leaders to refine your strategies for improving attendance.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the head of school and the executive headteacher. I also met with other senior leaders, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer and director of education, pupils, staff, the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I observed pupils in lessons and looked at their books. I also looked at your self-evaluation, improvement plans, and safeguarding arrangements and other documentation linked to the school's performance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, and the chief executive officer of the GLF Schools Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Croydon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Garnham
Her Majesty's Inspector