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Lee Ratcliffe  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Ratcliffe

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Calderstones School**

Following my visit to your school on 28 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 has received three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the second 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:

- improve the quality of help and support for those pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read, or those pupils who have fallen behind with their reading, including pupils in key stage 4
- train teachers to design the most appropriate activities to deliver the content of the curriculum, and support teachers with how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the leadership team has been restructured and several new teachers have joined the school. The number of pupils on roll at the school has increased.

## **Main findings**

Due to the impact of the pandemic, your plans for improvement have been slightly delayed. Despite this, during this time you have made changes to the leadership structure of the school. You have carefully revised the roles and responsibilities at senior leadership level. You have also successfully appointed new staff across the school. These factors have been crucial in supporting you in your work to address the areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection. They are also assisting you to bring about the necessary changes to the quality of education that pupils receive.

Along with senior leaders, the governing body is providing an increasingly robust level of challenge and support. Governors have improved their quality assurance processes and they maintain a close oversight of the curriculum, holding senior and subject leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. Leaders have improved the quality of information that they share with governors. Governors are now becoming more knowledgeable about subject curriculums than they were previously. This is helping them to ask pertinent questions to gain a deeper understanding of how well the curriculum is being delivered.

You, and other senior leaders, middle leaders and governors are overhauling the curriculum. As a result, it is now increasingly broad and ambitious for all pupils in all key stages, including in key stage 3. You have taken steps to ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those pupils with SEND, access the same curriculum as their peers. For example, you have taken appropriate steps to ensure that an increasing number of pupils follow the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. You have also removed the systems that limited some pupils' subject choices in key stage 4.

Senior leaders have ensured that subject leaders have the resources that they need to prepare a coherent curriculum. You are developing subject leaders' expertise to be able to design and oversee a high-quality curriculum. Subject leaders are currently ensuring that teachers are clear about the knowledge and content that pupils need to learn. They are also carefully considering the order in which teachers deliver new curriculum content. This is helping pupils to experience a more coherent curriculum that helps pupils to build on their earlier learning. While this work is well under way, some subjects are further on than others. You have appropriate plans in place to ensure that subject leaders continue to benefit from appropriate training and support in this area, including the use of external expertise, when needed.

In addition, you and your senior leaders are working to ensure further improvements in how well the curriculum is delivered. For example, some teachers are using leaders' assessment systems increasingly well to understand if pupils remember and recall their previous learning. This is helping teachers to better identify and address pupils' misconceptions. However, the delivery of the curriculum remains uneven across all subjects for all pupils. Some teachers do not choose the most appropriate activities to deliver the content of the curriculum to pupils. Also, some teachers do not know how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum effectively enough for pupils with SEND.

You and other senior leaders are prioritising reading. A whole-school focus on developing pupils' subject-specific vocabulary and strategies for developing reading knowledge are in place. All staff have received training from reading experts about how to support pupils with reading. This is helping pupils to develop their literacy and vocabulary skills across a range of subjects. Targeted strategies to support pupils' reading fluency in key stage 3, such as well-being reading time, are giving pupils access to ambitious and culturally diverse texts. They are beginning to promote a love of reading. Pupils in key stage 4 benefit less from well-planned sessions to improve their reading accuracy and fluency.

Recently, you have introduced systems to identify and support those pupils in the very early stages of learning to read. For example, staff are developing an awareness of the importance of systematic synthetic phonics in supporting early readers. However, this current support is not embedded enough to enable some pupils who are behind with their reading to catch up quickly. This hinders how well these pupils access the full curriculum.

Although at the time of the last inspection, behaviour and personal development were judged to be good by Ofsted, you have continued to implement further improvements in these areas. You explained that due to the impact of the pandemic, an increasing number of pupils have been affected by social, emotional and mental health issues. You have been proactive in responding to this. For example, you have introduced discrete lessons to increase the coverage of personal, social, health and economic education. You have also invested in extra pastoral staff and a well-being hub. The attendance rates for pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged remain low in some instances. However, you

have made suitable amendments to attendance policies and systems to address this concern.

### **Additional support**

You have made effective use of the support provided by external advisers and services to bring about improvements in a range of areas, including the quality of the curriculum. Leaders have engaged with other schools to provide support to develop teachers' and leaders' subject-specialist knowledge and leadership at all levels. Subject leaders are in the process of using this training to strengthen the delivery of the curriculum. Furthermore, you and your senior leaders have used this support well to quality assure and externally verify improvements to the curriculum across the school. You are ensuring that improvements to the quality of education, which have been supported by external partners, are sustainable.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you and with other senior leaders. I also met with pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I discussed the curriculum with the subject leaders of science, mathematics, history, geography and modern foreign languages. I met with the leaders responsible for the curriculum, for literacy and for pupils with SEND. I visited a sample of lessons with the headteacher. I met a group of pupils from Years 8 and 10 to discuss their experiences of school life. I looked at samples of pupils' work. I examined a range of documentation, including the school development plan and records of visits by external advisers. I checked the single central record.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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

Amanda Downing  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**