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Mrs Holly Rigby
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Dear Mrs Rigby

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Telford Park School

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 2020, 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 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.

Senior leaders and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that pupils in all year groups achieve well
- embed effective implementation of the curriculum across all subject areas
- increase the number of pupils who have high attendance by continuing to take swift and effective action
- ensure that fixed-term exclusions continue to be used appropriately and that permanent exclusions continue to be used as a last resort.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the headteacher, other senior leaders and the multi-academy trust chief executive officer (CEO) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school development plan and action plans were evaluated. I reviewed minutes of governing body meetings. I checked the single central record and the procedures for the recruitment of staff.

I visited lessons across the school with the headteacher and assistant headteacher. I looked at a range of pupils' work and talked to pupils about their learning. I observed pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes. I spoke to pupils and staff informally to ask them how the school has changed since the last inspection.

Context

Following a staffing restructure in September 2019, there have been some significant changes since the previous inspection. The number of senior leaders has been increased with the appointment of two additional assistant headteachers. Three new teachers have been appointed in English, geography and computing. The size of the pastoral team has increased, with the number of houses increasing from two to three. One new head of house and two new assistant heads of house have been appointed, along with two additional student support officers. In addition, a student counsellor, a qualified social worker, an education welfare officer and an attendance clerk have all joined the staff.

The number of pupils on roll has significantly increased. The current Year 7 and Year 8 are full and oversubscribed.

Main findings

Leaders have taken decisive action to secure improvements since the previous inspection. This is most notable in the quality of teaching. Further improvements have been made to the already high-quality pastoral care provided for pupils.

Overall, outcomes for Year 11 pupils leaving the school last year were weak. One of the reasons for this is the significantly high mobility of pupils in key stage 4. Many of the pupils who joined the school mid-year last year had low attendance at their previous school. Also, their engagement with education in the past had been poor. The school provided additional support from staff, such as academic coaches, for pupils who had fallen behind. However, a legacy of weak teaching over time means that these barriers to learning have not been overcome. That said, all pupils last year went on to employment and training or education. The vast majority of pupils successfully completed or continued their courses. An external careers adviser is quick to re-engage those pupils who do leave their placement back into education.

Leaders' reflection on pupils' outcomes has resulted in them taking decisive action. From their analysis of the examination results, they concluded that examination-focused learning was having a negative effect on pupils' progress. Pupils' learning was inhibited by weak understanding and gaps in their knowledge.

Consequently, leaders have undertaken an in-depth curriculum review. A new curriculum model is being introduced and will be fully implemented by September 2020. A key feature is that key stage 3 will be delivered over three years instead of two. Leaders believe that this additional time in key stage 3 will enable pupils to build a solid foundation of knowledge and understanding in a broad range of subjects. This will prepare pupils better for key stage 4.

A key priority for the school has been to improve the quality of teaching. The addition of an experienced assistant headteacher with responsibility for teaching and learning has given the school more capacity to move things forward. Several new initiatives have been developed. For example, the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education inform more precisely the training requirements for staff. A range of training has been delivered, including whole-school, departmental and individual. Departments are taking responsibility for developing their own curriculum, sharing good practice across subjects and leading whole-staff training. As a result, middle leaders are confident in their ability to develop a curriculum that will improve pupils' knowledge and skills over time. These improvements are already having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Lesson visits and the work seen in pupils' books confirm this. For example, effective challenge for pupils was seen in English, where pupils were encouraged to use more sophisticated and advanced vocabulary to improve their written and spoken responses to questions and tasks.

The increased capacity of the pastoral team, including the addition of an experienced assistant headteacher, is having a positive effect on improving pupils' attendance. There is not a significant increase in overall attendance, but certain year groups' attendance shows signs of improvement. The attendance for Years 7 and 8, for example, has markedly improved over time.

Leaders have appointed an education welfare officer and an attendance clerk this year. Staff track and monitor attendance carefully and act swiftly to address attendance issues. Consequently, some pupils have made a significant improvement in their attendance from low starting points. The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent is decreasing over time.

Staff and pupils say that behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Evidence found during the inspection supports this. For example, pupils are engaged in their learning, and learning is not disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. At breaktimes, lunchtimes and between lessons, the school is calm and orderly.

The school has a range of effective strategies to support pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour. This includes the use of restorative practice, support

from the student support officers, mentoring and therapeutic input from members of staff in 'The Bridge'. These strategies are having a positive impact on improving pupils' behaviour. The rate of fixed-term and repeat fixed-term exclusions is reducing over time. The number of pupils who need to spend time in the 'consequences room' is also decreasing. This is particularly so for the most vulnerable pupils, including pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Governors provide leaders with effective support and challenge. For example, governors challenge leaders appropriately about the financial implications of the new staffing structure, the impact of the use of additional funding on pupils' progress and other areas. They take their statutory responsibilities seriously.

The trust, through the work of the CEO, has been instrumental in the school's journey of improvement. For example, the coaching provided by the CEO for middle leaders on curriculum development is helping them to continually improve the implementation of their subjects. The deputy headteachers from the school's partner secondary school provide effective support and challenge for the new assistant headteachers.

Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. School development plans are detailed and focused on the right areas for improvement. They are reviewed regularly and adapted when required. Leaders are clear about their next steps. Together with a highly committed staff, they are determined that every pupil achieves the best they can.

External support

Support for the school has been provided by the trust's partner schools. This has included joint training and the sharing of effective practice. This support has contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Telford & Wrekin. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Yates
Her Majesty's Inspector