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Mr Andy Ireland
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Ireland

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Westfield School

Following my visit to your school on 20 April 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

The school should take further action to ensure that:

- teaching consistently stretches and challenges the most-able pupils
- all members of the governing body have a good understanding of their statutory duties relating to safeguarding pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, the school business manager, the inclusion manager, the faculty leader for physical education and a member of the governing body with responsibility for safeguarding to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with representatives of the local authority. The school improvement plan and other documents relating to safeguarding and health and safety were evaluated. We undertook a walk through the school and visited lessons in the sports centre, mathematics, English, science, design technology and modern foreign languages departments in order to observe pupils' attitudes to learning and to sample some of their books.

The effectiveness of safeguarding and the school's health and safety arrangements was a particular focus for this visit.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, one senior leader and nine teachers have left the school. The head of department for mathematics left for promotion and a new head of department took up post in January 2016. There is a new chair of the governing body and three other new governors have recently been appointed.

Main findings

Since my last visit a year ago, the school has continued to improve and remains on course to be judged a good school when next inspected.

Following the disappointing examination results in 2014, outcomes for pupils improved in 2015 to be broadly average. However, some groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged and the most able, did not do as well as other pupils nationally. Outcomes improved because the work you have done to improve the quality of teaching ensured that more pupils made expected progress, particularly in mathematics where pupils had underperformed the previous year.

The progress of pupils currently in the school has continued to strengthen, and the proportion in the current Year 11 on track to attain five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics is set to rise again in 2016. In addition, focused work on the performance of those groups who achieved less well last year has been effective. Disadvantaged pupils and the most-able pupils currently in Year 11 are on course to attain much better outcomes than last year.

You have continued to check the quality of teaching regularly and have opened up the school to external scrutiny in order to validate your own evaluations. These show the quality of teaching to be improving overall. You know where teaching still requires improvement and have tailored coaching in place to help teachers improve their practice. You have identified that further work needs to be done to ensure that teaching consistently stretches and challenges the most-able pupils, so that they make good progress. You know which teachers do this well and have begun using them to coach others. On our walk through the school, we observed pupils working diligently and enjoying practical activities. The school was calm and orderly and learning in all classrooms visited was purposeful. In the books I sampled, it was evident that most pupils take care with presentation and respond positively to the regular marking and feedback they receive. Pupils listened attentively to instructions and supported one another well in group activities. Where practical equipment was in use, there were clear arrangements in place to ensure safe working practices.

The school shows a strong commitment to inclusion and staff manage behaviour effectively. Since my last visit there have been no permanent exclusions and you have successfully reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions. Your approach to supporting pupils who exhibit more challenging behaviour is increasingly successful. As a result, the number of pupils being referred to the reflection room is reducing. You have successfully re-integrated a number of pupils who have spent some time at the pupil referral unit or were at risk of exclusion from other schools. In addition, the successful introduction of the discovery group is allowing a number of pupils who have special educational needs or disability to make good progress within a mainstream curriculum.

Your rigorous approach to promoting good attendance has been highly successful. Overall attendance has improved steadily over the last three years and is now above the national average. In particular, there has been a significant reduction in the number of pupils who previously missed half a day of school each week, and the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved markedly because of the targeted action you have taken. The work of the attendance team is therefore contributing effectively to efforts to raise achievement and ensure that pupils are safe.

You have well-developed provision in place to support pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. A new student leadership team was introduced in September 2015 and a 'student standard' has been introduced, which sets out the characteristics of successful learners. These initiatives are helping to raise aspirations. Your programme of careers guidance is strong and many pupils benefit from the strong links you have with local employers. More pupils than ever now access A-level courses at local sixth-form providers when they leave Westfield School.

Your work to ensure that pupils are safe and know how to stay safe is well led and managed. All staff have received up-to-date training in child protection and know how to respond if a pupil makes a disclosure. Recent training has ensured that staff know how to recognise the signs of extremism. Pastoral leaders work effectively with other agencies to ensure that pupils at risk of abuse, neglect or radicalisation are supported in a timely manner. All staff have access to helpful information on safeguarding through the excellent safeguarding booklet that you make readily available in school. The lead governor for safeguarding meets regularly with school leaders to review policy and practice, and an audit of safeguarding arrangements is completed and reported to governors annually. However, some newer members of the governing body would benefit from further safeguarding training so that they fully understand their statutory duties.

During this visit, you and your leadership team provided good examples of how you reflect on and refine your arrangements for health and safety. For example, the work you are doing to review risk assessments across different subject areas shows your determination to ensure that pupils' safety is always a high priority.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school has continued to work closely with Handsworth Grange Community Sports College and Silverdale School through partnerships brokered by the local authority. In addition, regular and detailed scrutiny of the quality of teaching from the local authority and Learn Sheffield has provided leaders with helpful information and guidance across the last year. As a result, leaders are very clear about their next steps. Improvements in attainment and progress in the current Year 11 demonstrate the impact of this work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector