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Mrs Ruth England
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Dear Mrs England

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Shuttleworth College

Following my visit to your school on 25 April 2017, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2016. 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- urgently review the effectiveness of governors to ensure that all their statutory duties are met and the school development plan includes strategies to improve governance
- reduce further the number of pupils who are excluded, especially those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other leaders, the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school development plan was evaluated. Leaders joined me in short visits to lessons to see some of your work to improve pupils' literacy skills. I met with two separate groups of pupils to find out more about the support they receive to help them to improve their reading, and another group to find out about the help they have received to improve their attendance. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and talked informally with them to gather their views on the school and improvements made. A wide range of documentation was considered including information on pupils' attendance, exclusions and achievement.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been relatively few staff changes and the school is experiencing greater stability in teaching staff than in previous years. A new leader of humanities has been appointed along with an acting leader of science and a new leader of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Plans to become an academy are at an advanced stage. However, delays in this process mean that the proposed date has already been deferred several times and the conversion may now be unlikely to take place this academic year.

Main findings

Leaders are committed to their vision to make sure that the school is judged 'good' at its next inspection. They have demonstrated drive and tenacity in tackling the areas requiring improvement identified at the previous inspection.

A whole-school focus on developing pupils' literacy skills has brought about a transformational change in the school leading to a culture of reading. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the support they receive to help them to improve their reading. As a result, they are developing a love of reading and they now read a wider range of books than was available at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils know which fiction books are of the right level of difficulty for them because books in the library are clearly labelled. As yet, this colour-coding does not include non-fiction so pupils have to ask for guidance when choosing these books.

Intensive support is provided to help the weakest readers to improve their reading skills, including help in a group and individual support from 'reading leaders'. These are Year 10 pupils, carefully chosen and trained to help pupils with their reading without providing too much guidance. Reading leaders understand the importance of this responsibility and pupils who receive this help proudly, and confidently, told me how much their reading age had improved as a result. Pupils keep records of their reading but some pupils need further support in identifying what is going well and what they need to do to improve their reading.

Pupils share reading through a class reading book which they take turns to read aloud in form time. Teachers challenge pupils to extend their vocabulary and improve their comprehension because they regularly ask pupils to explain the meaning of words. This is already having some impact on improving pupils' speaking skills with further strategies identified in development plans such as your plans to introduce opportunities for pupils to take part in debates during form time and for pupils to be entered for speaking qualifications if they meet the required standard. Teachers help pupils to improve their spelling by telling them useful tips on spelling rules and strategies to help pupils to learn and remember the correct spelling of words. As a result, good use is made of form time and leaders regularly carry out checks to make sure that this continues to be the case.

A new marking policy, introduced following the previous inspection, places a strong focus on teachers tackling literacy errors. Leaders monitor the application of this carefully to make sure that all teachers follow the guidance and training they have been given in its use. Where inconsistencies are identified, further checks are carried out and additional support is provided for any staff who need it.

In response to the previous inspection, you have driven a whole-school focus on improving aspirations. Teachers make sure that the most able pupils are taught the skills they need to be successful at the highest grades in their GCSEs. You carefully match pupils to the right curriculum pathway for them, such as making sure that the most able pupils have the opportunity to be entered for three separate sciences. As a result of this work, more Year 11 pupils than in the past are indicated to be 'on track' to attain five or more top grades in their GCSE examinations. Pupils recognise the value of the additional support they receive on 'drop down' days. These days provide bespoke revision time which benefits all pupils, including the most able.

Following the appointment of your new leader of PSHE and citizenship, careful planning of this provision means that pupils have more opportunities to learn about law, democracy, rights and responsibilities, for example. Pupils in Years 7 to 10 have weekly citizenship lessons, enhanced further through PSHE days and a broad range of assembly themes which are planned over the year. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe from a range of dangers such as sexting, and how to safely use social media. Pupils have more opportunity to learn about other faiths and cultures although this work is at the very early stages of implementation.

Attendance continues to improve and is 'on track' to be similar to the national average. Fewer pupils are persistently absent, including pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils told me that in the past they did not have the necessary motivation to attend school regularly. However, with the additional support provided for them through meeting together as an 'attendance group' or having their own mentor, they can see the difference this is making. They understand the importance of attending school regularly and say that their school work has improved as a result. Exclusions, although reducing, remain high for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Other strategies are needed to help these pupils to manage their own behaviour rather than excluding them from school, which does little to support their improving attendance or to help them to avoid missing work while excluded.

Governors have undergone some initial restructuring including a reduction in the number of governors from 15 to eight. All governors now attend all three meetings each term which provides them with first-hand information on leaders' work and enables them all to ask questions to hold leaders to account. Governors are not yet able to state confidently that all their statutory duties are now met, such as to make sure that the school's website meets requirements. There is no evidence that all that governors have read and understand the most recent safeguarding guidance. Although governors are aware that exclusions are reducing, they do not know how this compares with national figures. Governors are keen to identify if they have the necessary skills to challenge leaders and hold them to account. A review of governance is scheduled to take place shortly, although this has been an intention for some time. The school development plan includes appropriate actions to tackle the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. However, it gives little mention to strategies to improve governance. Milestones are provided to enable leaders, including governors, to check if improvement is happening quickly enough. Most areas are on track to achieve the clearly identified success criteria.

External support

The school draws on a range of external support, including from the local authority that has an accurate picture of the improvements made by the school. Further support is provided through Blessed Trinity Roman Catholic College, including moderation of teachers' assessments, improving provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and improving literacy. The school engages the services of a specialist leader of education to support improvements in the English department and deliver strategies to help pupils in Year 11 to prepare for their examinations and, as a result, attainment is rising.

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

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector