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Mr C Wilcocks
Principal
Leeds West Academy
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Dear Mr Wilcocks

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Leeds West Academy

Following my visit with Gordon Watts, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 22 June 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 March 2017. 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 academy.

Evidence

During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with you, other senior leaders and the vice chair of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Discussions also took place with representatives of the White Rose Academies Trust and a representative of the Gorse Academies Trust. Inspectors evaluated the school improvement plan and a range of documents relating to attendance, behaviour and the school's monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Observations of lessons and learning walks were undertaken on the school site and off site as pupils studied at alternative provision. A meeting was held with pupils to

gather their views.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, a new principal has taken up role. The acting principal at the time of the inspection has returned to his role as associate principal. Changes to staffing have continued since the inspection, and 28 teachers, including 13 with additional responsibilities, have left the school this year. More staff have joined the school over this period, with 33 teachers joining the school, including 14 with additional responsibilities.

Main findings

Leaders and governors share your high expectations and determination to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school and to raise achievement for all groups of pupils. A structured programme of development is taking place to address all the areas for improvement identified at the recent inspection. School improvement plans place a great emphasis on improving the progress of pupils who are eligible for additional support through the pupil premium funding and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff and governors are aware of the actions they should undertake and of their responsibilities under these plans. You have also ensured that the general intentions and expectations of these plans have been shared with pupils and parents. This sets down a clear and early marker of the value you place on working with pupils and their families to make Leeds West Academy a good school. The results of external reviews that you have commissioned of the pupil premium funding and governance are eagerly anticipated to further strengthen school plans.

Since the last inspection, senior leaders and governors have worked tirelessly with the trust and school partners to bring greater stability to teaching and learning. As a result, the school now has a full allocation of staff for the first time in 12 months, with specialist teachers recruited in English, mathematics and science. Many of the new senior and middle leaders have already taken up post, with the remainder due to join in September. Pupils and sixth-form students like the stability that these new leaders are providing and the efforts they have made to seek their views and to listen to them.

The central importance of teachers in accelerating and sustaining rapid changes in the learning and progress of pupils is demonstrated in governors' plans to meet with staff and pupils much more frequently than they did in the past, in order to see the way changes are being implemented and the difference they are making to pupils' learning and progress. Already, inspectors could see that some teachers are using a range of strategies in the classroom and are seeking to involve pupils much more in lessons. This, in turn, is welcomed by pupils, and where it was sustained they explained that it helped them to be more engaged and active learners. However, at this stage, the variability within subjects and lack of challenge remain key priorities

that very recently appointed leaders are keen to tackle. The provision for pupils studying off site with a range of different providers is well organised. Pupils' confidence in literacy and numeracy are developing and they are making progress in acquiring new skills to support their next steps in learning and employment.

The school's work to identify the barriers to achievement across the school is demonstrated most successfully in the changes introduced to increase attendance and improve behaviour. Realignment of the work of some staff and the introduction of new roles have started to provide useful additional support to key groups of pupils. The high quality of behaviour specialists who provide support to pupils with very challenging behaviour is making a difference. Serious behaviour incidents and exclusions are decreasing. New leaders have made headway in identifying the barriers to attendance for some groups of pupils. Strategies are starting to take effect. The attendance of pupils who are disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who have had persistently low attendance is starting to rise. Leaders are also starting to galvanise attendance more widely with the measures they have begun to introduce. All pupils have targets to aspire to and some are starting to track their own progress in their school planners. However, at this late stage in the term, the measures taken have made little difference to improving attendance in the sixth form. A more proactive approach in September is planned.

External support

The school is starting to build a network of support and challenge, drawing on stronger practice in the White Rose Academies Trust and good and outstanding schools in the Gorse Academies Trust. Together with your senior leaders and governors, you have used meetings with senior executives from both organisations to inform the depth and detail of the improvement plans for West Leeds Academy. As a result, a programme of planned changes to the curriculum, including arrangements for alternative provision, and tailored literacy and numeracy support programmes is scheduled to take place over the course of next term. Governors have commissioned a programme of external scrutiny and tailored support from the Gorse Academies Trust. This detailed programme is due to begin shortly.

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White

Her Majesty's Inspector