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Mrs Lynne Fox
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Dear Mrs Fox

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bramhall High School

Following my visit to your school on 23 April 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help that you gave me and for the time that you made available to discuss the actions that you are taking 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 governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

Leaders should take further action to:

- build on the improvements that they have already made to ensure that more disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities attend school regularly
- improve further the progress that disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities make, particularly in key stage 4.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior and middle leaders, four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with a group of pupils from key stages 3 and 4. I toured the school with you to observe teaching and learning. With two senior leaders, I scrutinised the work of a small number of pupils. I reviewed the school development plan and

evaluation documents. Leaders also provided me with a range of documents relating to teaching and learning, pupils' behaviour and progress.

Context

Since the last inspection, a managed employer reduction process has taken place. As part of this process, you have reorganised the structure of the senior leadership team and there is now only one deputy headteacher. A new head of history has been appointed to the school. You have also appointed a new special educational needs coordinator.

Main findings

At the last inspection, the effectiveness of leadership and management was judged to be good. The leadership of the school has been strengthened even further in the last 12 months. You continue to lead the school very effectively. Governors and the local authority have complete confidence in your leadership. You have galvanised the whole school community. It is clear that you have the support of staff, pupils and parents, who value what you are doing to improve the school.

You are ably supported by a strong leadership team who work in a coherent and purposeful manner. Senior leaders now have roles that are directly linked to the leadership of key aspects of the school development plan. This means that leaders are working in a more focused manner. They work together in a joined-up way to ensure that their actions have a positive impact on pupils' progress. While rightly proud of the impact of their actions so far, they are acutely aware of what remains to be done.

Governors continue to provide effective support and challenge to you and other leaders in school. They have improved their own capacity further by recruiting new members to the governing body who have a range of skills and expertise.

The quality of teaching and learning across the school has improved in the last year. This means that more pupils are now benefiting from routinely good teaching. Thorough quality-assurance procedures mean that senior leaders have an accurate understanding of what is typically happening in classrooms on a daily basis. Where teaching is not strong enough, leaders are providing personalised support for staff.

A high priority for leaders has been to ensure that all staff have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Staff training has focused on providing sufficient challenge and developing questioning skills to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Monitoring information shows that while this has had some impact, this effective practice is not happening consistently in all classrooms.

A scrutiny of pupils' work revealed the variation in teachers' expectations. This was evident in standards of presentation as well as in the depth, breadth and level of challenge in the work. Some teachers are skilfully adapting the type of work

appropriately to meet the needs of pupils, but again, this is not happening across the school.

The improvements in the quality of teaching are having a positive impact on pupils' progress in all year groups, particularly in key stage 3. Leaders use assessment information very effectively to track the progress of all pupils. They then use this to inform their decisions and actions.

The overall progress measure for all pupils in Year 11 improved from 2016 to 2017. The school's most recent assessment information indicates that this is set to improve further in 2018. The progress measure for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is also set to improve. However, leaders acknowledge that there is more work to be done to ensure that these pupils make even better progress, particularly in key stage 4. A significant proportion of disadvantaged pupils join the school at different times throughout the year. Leaders are now using the pupil premium funding more effectively to target appropriate personalised support to meet the needs of these pupils and help them to succeed.

There is a more focused approach to the leadership of literacy across the school. The two priorities this year have been reading and marking for literacy. The reading programme in key stage 3 has improved pupils' engagement with reading for pleasure. It has also made a significant difference to the reading ages of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders decided to simplify the policy on how to mark for literacy. More teachers are now applying the policy in marking pupils' literacy errors but leaders acknowledge that this is still not happening consistently.

Following consultation with staff, you made amendments to the behaviour system. Staff now have more ownership of the process, particularly at departmental level. Consequently, the policy is being applied more consistently than at the time of the last inspection. More importantly, behaviour data shows that throughout this year there has been a reduction in incidents of poor behaviour and in the number of pupils being given detentions and fixed-term exclusions.

In the last year, ensuring that all pupils attend school regularly has been a high priority. Leadership of this area is focused and effective. Consequently, pupils' attendance has improved. Overall absence and persistent absence rates are now slightly below national averages.

The reorganisation of leadership roles means that the school is more effectively supporting pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. For example, the attendance team has worked closely with the SEN department to liaise with families and other agencies to improve the attendance of this group of pupils. This has had a significant impact and the attendance rate for this group of pupils is considerably higher than at the same time last year. However, this still remains well below the national average.

Actions taken to improve the attendance rate of disadvantaged pupils have not had as much impact. The attendance rate for this group shows little improvement on the

same time last year. However, behind the overall figure there are success stories which show that many individual pupils are now attending school regularly. Leaders understand the specific reasons for each pupil's high absence rate. There is no doubting their absolute commitment to providing appropriate support for each pupil to help them to attend school regularly.

External support

Since the last inspection, you have worked with the head of service at the local authority to agree an appropriate support package for the school. You decided that you wanted time for your leaders to take action to bring about improvements in their respective areas. The local authority is scheduled to come in to school later this term to provide an external evaluation of the impact of these actions. The local authority has recently made funding available for the school to broker its own support, particularly to develop the quality of middle leadership. The local authority has also supported the school in offering language conversion courses to teachers. This means that the school is able offer a range of modern foreign language courses at GCSE level.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne

Her Majesty's Inspector