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Mrs Anna Rooney
Principal
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Dear Mrs Rooney

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to De Warenne Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 9 May 2019, 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 you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy 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. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in May 2018, the academy was also judged to require improvement.

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 academy to become good.

The academy should take further action to:

- continue the focus on boys' progress and attendance and raise teachers' expectations of the presentation of boys' work.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, leaders from the multi-academy trust, including the chief executive officer and members of the academy advisory board (AAB) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A meeting was also held with a group of Year 11 pupils. You and I made short visits to lessons, during which we spoke to pupils and reviewed work in their books. The school improvement plan and the pupil premium statement and strategy were evaluated. Other documents provided by the school were reviewed including those relating to behaviour, safeguarding and teaching and learning.

Context

There have been considerable staffing changes, particularly at senior leadership level, since the last inspection. Two associate vice-principals, two assistant principals and three associate assistant principals took up post in September 2018. New heads of department in mathematics and English also started in September 2018. A number of other teachers have also joined the school, including those teaching science, history, geography and food technology.

Main findings

You have continued your drive for improvement since the last inspection. You have shown strong and determined leadership despite the lack of capacity in senior leadership you faced before September last year. There is now much greater capacity at senior leadership level and this has supported you in accelerating improvement in the school.

You have carefully thought out plans for improvement, including the plan to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Plans are regularly monitored and evaluated. The AAB has a sub-committee specifically to monitor the impact of pupil premium spending and the impact of the plans to improve attendance and outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the attendance and outcomes of disadvantaged pupils improved during 2018.

Members of the AAB have a clear understanding of their role in challenging and supporting leaders and in providing reports to the trust. The members of the AAB know well the strengths and weaknesses of the school through the detailed papers provided at meetings and visits to the school. New senior leaders provide helpful information about their areas of work. The AAB is thus playing its part in evaluating the impact of actions taken to improve the school. However, members of the board recognise that their minutes of meetings do not always reflect the challenging questions they ask.

Although still variable, the quality of teaching has improved. This is because of the determined focus on professional development of teachers and also because the

school is fully staffed. Lead teachers from the trust contribute to the improving picture of teaching. The quality of teaching is carefully monitored by senior and middle leaders. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of teaching. They provide coaching and support where teachers need to improve their practice, which has had a positive impact on the overall quality of teaching.

A new policy to help teachers plan learning which takes pupils' starting points into consideration when planning learning activities is consistently applied. Pupils are required to 'demonstrate' their learning at the end of the lesson. This piece of work is used by teachers to provide a 'connect' activity at the beginning of the next lesson. This allows teachers to address misconceptions and deepen the learning of the most able. We agreed that the next step is to ensure that the 'demonstrate' and 'connect' activities are of consistently high quality.

For the most part, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is reflected in the work in pupils' books and in their improved attitudes to their learning. Many pupils show pride in their work and its presentation. However, some teachers do not have the same high expectations of boys' presentation as they do of girls' presentation.

Online resources provide meaningful homework opportunities for pupils. Year 11 pupils were seen selecting mathematics activities they would undertake at home to consolidate their revision. Rewards are given weekly to the pupils who make best use of these online activities. It is too soon to see the impact of this and other homework pilots such as the homework booklet.

Work to improve pupils' behaviour is having some success. Behaviour logs show a reduction in the number of pupils removed from lessons compared to the same time last year. However, a high number of pupils are still removed from lessons. During the inspection, pupils' behaviour in the vast majority of lessons visited, and at social times, was calm and orderly. Year 11 pupils were very positive about the improvements in behaviour. The incidence of fixed-term exclusions and the proportion of pupils receiving more than one fixed-term exclusion have halved from the same period last year. However, these figures are still slightly higher than the most recent national average.

Attendance has improved and persistent absence has reduced, including for disadvantaged pupils. Current attendance is broadly in line with the national average. However, the attendance of boys is lower than that of girls.

Incidents of bullying have reduced. Weekly bullying surveys in tutor time allow pupils to alert staff to any concerns they might have. Year 11 pupils confirmed that there had been improvements in the way bullying is dealt with. They suggested that a very small minority of vulnerable pupils might need additional help to manage issues.

Detailed plans are in place to improve the scope and quality of personal, social, health, and citizenship education (PSHCE) through assemblies and 'life' lessons in Year 7 and Year 8. An imaginative approach is used to develop PSHCE skills in Year 9 and Year 10 through a sports studies qualification, with a further 15 hours of PSHCE at the end of Year 10. Tutor times contribute part of the PSHCE curriculum in all year groups, but there is no formal process to assure the quality of delivery in tutor times. Year 11 have not benefited fully from this curriculum. They say that they would value more work on aspects such as sex education and financial management. You are addressing this next year by providing a lesson each week in Year 11. Overall, it is too soon to see the impact of the work on PSHCE. What is tangible is the ethos of positivity you have cultured in the school, for example as a result of rewards for success in assembly.

In 2018, overall progress at the end of key stage 4 was in line with the national average. The impact of the school's work with disadvantaged pupils could be seen in their overall progress, which was in line with the national average of other pupils. Outcomes in science and humanities were weaker than those in English and mathematics. Observations and work in pupils' books show that there are improvements in the quality of teaching in science and geography which impact well on current pupils' progress. Analysis of current assessment based on the trust's moderated tests suggests that current progress in science, history and geography is better than at the same time last year.

In 2018, progress of girls was above the national average for girls in English and mathematics, but boys were slightly below the national average for boys. You have recognised this gap in outcomes between boys and girls. Actions including competitions using homework apps, specialist tutor groups and regular meetings to check boys' progress are in place. The school's assessment information suggests that this is having a positive impact on boys' progress. Indeed, boys' progress in English and mathematics was better in 2018 than in 2017 GCSE examinations.

External support

Directors of the trust provide strong support for middle and senior leaders. New middle leaders value the directors' support for the development of their leadership skills and the quality of teaching in their departments.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane

Senior Her Majesty's Inspector