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Dear Miss Langley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The King's Church of England School

Following my visit to your school on 3 February 2022, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school received a judgement of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspection.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that leaders are sharply focusing on the quality of subject curriculums in the sixth form

- ensure that as pupils learn the curriculum, teachers are checking that pupils know and remember the important building blocks of knowledge so that they can connect new learning with what they have learned before.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the school. You were appointed as interim principal in April 2021. A vice principal was appointed in December 2018. In addition, a new assistant principal joined the leadership team in summer 2019 and two acting assistant principals have been appointed. There have also been changes in other leadership roles. For instance, new faculty leaders for science and mathematics have been appointed.

During the national lockdowns caused by the pandemic, the annual cycle of self-review, the local authority challenge meetings and subject reviews were paused. These have now all restarted.

The school is due to become a sponsored academy.

Main findings

Leaders have faced many significant challenges since the last inspection. They have had to correct a host of building defects following a major refurbishment of the school. This has been a complex process that has been made more difficult by the pandemic. As a result, leaders' attention could easily have been drawn away from improving pupils' education. This has not happened. Instead, leaders have continued to make the improvements needed.

Leaders' plans to improve the school focus on the right things. They reflect the progress that leaders have made and the challenges that lie ahead. COVID-19 has delayed the pace of change to some extent. However, leaders' creativity and energy have ensured that improvement has not stalled.

You have placed the school's vision statement at the heart of your work. Staff and pupils work together to 'grow, learn and aspire'. Staff are quick to reward pupils for their efforts. Pupils told me that they are proud to be part of their school. One pupil summed this up, commenting 'everyone works well as a team'.

Leaders expect the best from staff and pupils. All understand the expectations, and teachers apply them consistently in lessons. Lessons are calm and productive. Staff provide practical support so that pupils are ready to learn. Pupils understand the sanctions for poor behaviour. Leaders carefully check the use of sanctions and intervene quickly when needed. After issuing a sanction, teachers speak to pupils to build relationships, provide support and help them improve. As a result, the number

of pupils removed from lessons is low. Yet the number of suspensions from school remains high. Leaders know that this needs to reduce.

Pupils learn a broad range of subjects at key stage 3. Leaders have adapted the curriculum in Year 9 in response to COVID-19. This has meant all pupils continue to learn all the creative subjects. Pupils have not always learned a broad or deep computing curriculum. This is because computing has not been part of pupils' usual fortnightly timetable. Leaders have addressed this in some year groups, but not all.

The range of subjects that pupils can choose from at key stage 4 is equally broad. However, the number of pupils taking the range of qualifications that make up the English Baccalaureate is low. This is because too few pupils study a modern foreign language. Leaders have recognised this and made significant changes. They have introduced pathways that encourage pupils to study a language in Years 10 and 11. In addition, leaders have recently introduced Spanish into the key stage 3 curriculum.

Leaders have acted to strengthen subject leadership, especially in mathematics and science. Senior leaders work with subject leaders to evaluate, review and improve the quality of subject curriculums. They help subject leaders to understand what high-quality curriculums look like. As a result, they know precisely where the curriculum is strongest and where it needs to improve.

Leaders' work to improve the curriculum has been ongoing since the last inspection. They have thought about the order of pupils' learning. This means that pupils' learning builds on what they have learned before. Leaders have also adjusted the order in response to the pandemic. However, in some subjects, the curriculum lacks specificity. In these cases, the knowledge that pupils need to know, and how teachers will check they have remembered it, is not clearly set out. It is not clear how pupils link new learning with what they have learned before. This means that pupils do not make the connections they need to develop a deeper understanding. In other subjects, pupils do this well. For instance, in geography, teachers make regular checks on pupils' knowledge of where places are in the world. This helps pupils see the bigger picture when learning about case studies.

Subject leaders have 'aimed high' when constructing their curriculum. They have looked to make the curriculum ambitious for all. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Senior leaders continue to review this provision to make sure that there is no ceiling placed on pupils' achievement.

Senior leaders' actions have strengthened the leadership of the sixth form. The range of courses available to students is appropriate. Students can choose from a range of academic and vocational pathways. They are strong advocates of the sixth form. Students value the education and support teachers provide. However, senior leaders have not sufficiently prioritised the quality of the subject curriculums. This means that some sixth-form curriculums are not as well thought through as at other key stages.

Staff commented positively about the support they receive. Senior leaders continue to help staff improve through 'The King's development programme'. Staff said that leaders are supportive and sensitive to their workload. Teachers have time to discuss what they are teaching and the resources that they are using to deliver the curriculum. They value this.

Additional support

Leaders have been outward facing as they have sought to improve the school. They have utilised the support from the local authority well. This expertise has helped leaders to strengthen leadership at all levels.

In addition, you have sought to build relationships with other local schools. This has been successful and productive. It has given leaders the opportunity to reflect on their work and how they could do things better.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you throughout the day. I also met with other senior leaders, members of the local governing body, staff and pupils to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I also visited lessons and held meetings with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum. I looked at information on the school's website.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Tustian
Her Majesty's Inspector