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Mr Andrew Burton
Principal
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Dear Mr Burton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kingswood Secondary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 20 November 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 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 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 the trust 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.

The school should take further action to:

- embed the leadership structures and systems to monitor and improve the quality of education across the school
- develop strategies already in place to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school
- continue to support improvements in the quality of leadership, teaching and pupils' outcomes in mathematics
- continue to support pupils to avoid the risk of permanent exclusion.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, and a

group of staff to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with the chief executive officer, the director of education, a senior education adviser and the director of human resources of the Greenwood Academies Trust. One of the deputy headteachers and I visited several classes and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of teaching we observed. I met with a group of pupils and spoke to pupils informally in their lessons to evaluate the quality of their learning. I also looked at pupils' work in a sample of books from different classes and subjects. I read a variety of documents, including school improvement plans and the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress and attainment and records relating to pupils' behaviour. I scrutinised the school's checks on staff's suitability to work with children.

Context

Since the previous inspection you have restructured the leadership teams at all levels in the school. Seven leadership posts have been allocated to staff who did not previously hold leadership roles. Three senior leaders, including a deputy principal, have left the school. A new senior assistant principal has joined the school. An additional leader of mathematics has been appointed to join the school in January 2019. Several teaching staff have left and been replaced since the previous inspection.

Main findings

As headteacher, you provide effective leadership. You are determined to improve the quality of education to support pupils to achieve their best. You hold pupils' interests at the heart of all you do. At all levels, leadership is a strength of the school. Leaders share your clear vision and have communicated this effectively to all staff. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas in need of further improvement. You have identified clear priorities for improvement and written detailed plans to ensure that these are addressed. Leaders are reflective. They evaluate the impact of their actions and amend their plans accordingly.

You have created an atmosphere of positivity and a culture of striving for success. This is shared by staff and pupils. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. Older pupils recognise and value the improvements that have been made since the last inspection. Younger pupils appreciate the support they get from their teachers. Pupils know that their teachers want them to do well and they are keen to succeed.

Following the previous inspection, you took considered, decisive action to restructure leadership teams across the school. You reorganised subject departments into five faculty areas. Each faculty area has a leadership team consisting of a curriculum leader, a progress and standards leader, and a teaching and learning leader. This structure provides clear roles and responsibilities. It enables leaders to focus on the school's key priorities. All staff recognise their role

in school improvement. They understand leaders' aims and are keen to support them in achieving their ambitions for the school.

Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved across the school, including in mathematics and science, areas which were specifically identified as needing improvement. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and set challenging activities. During our visits to lessons, we observed teachers supporting pupils' understanding through clear explanations and effective questioning. Teachers consistently share learning intentions with pupils. These 'key questions' help pupils to understand what they are learning. In addition, success criteria are shared with pupils, which help them to understand how to improve their work. Leaders have changed the school's assessment and feedback policy. Pupils' work is now assessed according to a specific focus and key areas for improvement are identified. Teachers set 'therapy' tasks which are specific to individual pupils' needs. Work in pupils' books indicates that teachers' application of this policy is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils like this approach and say that it supports their learning. As one pupil said, 'It's so helpful!'

More recently, leaders have worked with the trust to develop the 'Kingswood Big 5' (achievement and progress; assessment and feedback; access, stretch and challenge; behaviour for learning; and communication), a framework of expected standards for teaching. This is further supported through the concept of 'QUENCH' (questioning, engagement and challenge), an aide-memoire for teachers to consider in their planning. All monitoring and staff development activities focus on specific aspects of the 'Kingswood Big 5'. This has ensured that staff are clear about leaders' expectations of their practice. There is a culture of challenge and support. Leaders have high expectations of staff's practice and staff feel supported to meet them. Leaders have developed a range of opportunities to share good practice between staff. For example, staff have recently participated in a week of peer observations. Their findings have been shared on the 'Wow Wall' in the staff room. This reflects staff's openness and desire to improve.

You have been creative in responding to the challenge of recruiting high-quality, qualified staff, particularly in mathematics. For example, you have worked with the local university to develop an accredited course to encourage potential teachers to retrain as mathematics specialists. You have also appointed a primary-trained teacher to support younger pupils to catch up in mathematics. Non-specialist staff are well supported by other teachers and senior leaders. Staff expertise is developing as a result.

In recent years, pupils' outcomes have been considerably below national averages. Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress and attainment has gradually increased. In 2018, overall progress improved and was similar to the national average. Overall attainment, however, remained below that achieved by all pupils nationally. Pupils' progress in English, science and the EBacc subjects improved and

was slightly below national averages. Progress in the open subjects improved considerably and was above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils' outcomes have improved greatly. There is now very little difference in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils.

In 2018, pupils' progress in mathematics declined and was approximately half a grade below that seen nationally. There is evidence that current pupils are making greater progress in mathematics than has been seen in the past. Nevertheless, improving outcomes in mathematics remains a key priority.

The last inspection identified the need to reduce the number of pupils who were temporarily excluded from school more than once. Leaders reviewed the behaviour policy and amended their approach to managing pupils' behaviour. There is now greater emphasis on supporting pupils and intervening quickly. The 'inspiration zone' has been developed and provides a structured programme of support which is adapted to meet individual pupils' specific needs. There have also been changes to the way the pastoral team works. Form tutors now take greater responsibility for monitoring pupils' behaviour. Non-teaching deputy heads of year intervene quickly to support pupils before their behaviour escalates to that causing concern. This work is supported by the school's HALO (home-agency liaison officer), for example through home visits.

The use of fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly. The number of days of exclusions has halved since the previous inspection. The number of pupils who are excluded more than once has also reduced greatly. No pupils have been excluded on more than one occasion this academic year. Staff and pupils report that behaviour around school and in lessons has improved. Permanent exclusion is used as a last resort after considerable work to support pupils. However, in 2018 the number of permanent exclusions was above the national average.

To complement the work to manage pupils' behaviour, you have also placed great emphasis on celebrating and rewarding pupils' successes. There are numerous celebration events, such as awards evenings and many means of recognising pupils' achievements. For example, pupils proudly wear special ties that they have been awarded for succeeding in different aspects of school life, such as academic progress, effort and contribution to the life of the school. Pupils enjoy being awarded 'inspiration points'.

External support

The trust has provided effective support in improving all aspects of the school. The trust conducts regular reviews of different aspects of the school's work, providing feedback and support to bring about the necessary improvements. Those responsible for governance are effective in proving an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Clear lines of accountability ensure that leaders are held to account effectively.

Leaders are proactive in working with other schools and agencies. They have visited several schools, nationally and locally, to learn from best practice. You participate in peer reviews, which supports your capacity as a leader as well as providing useful support elsewhere.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector