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Mr Glenn Mellor
Principal
Stoke High School – Ormiston Academy
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Dear Mr Mellor

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stoke High School – Ormiston Academy

Following my visit to your school on 21 April 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 May 2016. 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 recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- strengthen provision further for disadvantaged pupils, particularly by ensuring that all teachers convert their thorough understanding of individual pupils' needs into practical classroom strategies which effectively accelerate progress
- maintain high levels of pupil attendance, particularly for pupils who join the school after the school year has started
- ensure that the school website complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish online.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, pupils, governors and a representative of the Ormiston Academies Trust, to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. In addition, I reviewed a wide range of documents, policies and other related information. The school's self-evaluation and improvement plan were considered alongside the evidence gathered on the inspection day. I made a series of short visits to lessons, looked at pupils' books and spoke to them about their work.

Context

Since the previous inspection, in May 2016, the principal who was in post at the time has retired. A new principal has been in position since September 2016. There has been a restructuring of the senior leadership team. The head of mathematics has left and that position has temporarily been filled by a member of the senior leadership team.

Main findings

You have started your leadership of the school with determination and dedication. You have clearly and quickly established high aspirations for all aspects of the life of the school, and this is appreciated by staff, pupils and parents alike. With the support of leaders at all levels, you are making strong progress in improving the quality of teaching and in raising expectations of pupils' learning and their engagement in school.

You and your senior leadership team have developed an academy improvement plan that rightly prioritises actions needed to facilitate the school's journey to providing a good standard of education for all pupils. The plan is appropriately focused on the issues raised at the previous inspection and responsibilities are clearly defined. However, because the milestones which you are using to judge how well you are making progress in meeting these priorities are not clear enough on the central plan, it can be difficult for other leaders and governors to evaluate whether you are achieving the changes required within the necessary timescales.

Teachers and pupils are very conscious that behaviour at the school has improved notably since the previous inspection. Classrooms are now overwhelmingly calm and orderly environments. The consistency with which teachers apply the school's behaviour policy has improved. As a result, behaviour in lessons very rarely impedes learning. You have successfully strengthened the school's policy towards rewarding positive behaviour in lessons and as a result pupils are keen to contribute constructively.

In 2016, overall attendance and levels of persistent absence were in line with

national averages. This year, overall attendance has, however, weakened a little. You are working hard to ensure that the increasing number of pupils who join the school during the school year, rather than at its start, quickly develop positive habits of regular attendance. This is because attendance within this group has been low this year.

In 2016, outcomes for pupils improved slightly. However, they did not improve as much as school leaders had expected them to. As a result, you have introduced a number of strategies to improve the accuracy of assessment at the school. This has involved hugely increasing the amount of moderation which occurs. This is carried out not only by faculty and senior leaders, but by school leaders from other schools in the region. As a result, school leaders are confident that they have an increasingly secure understanding of the rate of improvement at the school, and evidence from this visit would support this view.

You are very conscious that if overall outcomes for pupils are to improve rapidly enough it is crucial that you urgently accelerate the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. You have put a range of sensible measures in place to help achieve this. The school's monitoring and quality assurance processes now focus appropriately on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are supported by a wide range of effective interventions, including individual and small group sessions in addition to pupils' normal lessons. School leaders have successfully improved communication with the parents of disadvantaged pupils, and consequently they are increasingly engaging with the school, for example by attending parents' evenings which has helped to support pupils' learning.

There is still room for the school to sharpen further its provision for disadvantaged pupils. The school ensures that all teachers have detailed knowledge about the individual needs of the disadvantaged pupils in their classes. However, not all teachers routinely convert this knowledge into practical strategies for accelerating their progress within lessons. Not all teachers are consistently following the school's expectations for teaching disadvantaged pupils, which requires them to specifically prioritise disadvantaged pupils when asking questions, marking books or planning lessons.

The school has introduced a number of strategies for supporting the learning of other important groups of pupils. You have implemented reading programmes which are specifically designed to improve the vocabulary and literacy of boys, particularly those who enter the school with low levels of literacy. You have sharpened the personal education plans of children looked after by the local authority so they focus appropriately on academic progress. You have reviewed and reduced the school's use of alternative provision, working effectively to ensure that a wider range of pupils' needs can be met within the school's own curriculum.

You have reviewed how learning support assistants are deployed within the school. You have deployed them in the areas of the curriculum which require the most

rapid improvement. The school has improved the level of training they receive and the coordination and communication they have with the subject teachers they support. As a result, provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving. You have also enhanced provision for pupils who join the school in the early stages of English language acquisition, ensuring that the intensive support they receive is proportionate to their needs, and that they have clear and appropriate pathways back into the mainstream curriculum when they are ready.

School leaders have successfully introduced a structured programme of training for teachers to help drive forward the necessary improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. Professional development for teachers is thorough, focused and increasingly tailored to their individual needs. For example, this has helped teachers to strengthen the consistency with which they apply the school's assessment policy. This emphasises high-quality feedback to help pupils know how to improve their work. As a result, pupils say that they are feeling increasingly engaged in their learning.

Governors continue to provide effective support and challenge to school leaders. However, they have not ensured that the school's website complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish online. For example, there is insufficient information provided about the school's use of pupil premium and catch-up funding, or about the nature of the governing body itself.

External support

The school is benefiting from effective external support. The Ormiston Academies Trust has provided support and challenge appropriate to the development needs of the school. It has provided guidance and training for senior and middle leaders. Most importantly, it has provided access to a network of schools with whom the school can undertake a comprehensive and coordinated moderation of standards. School leaders have, where appropriate, sought external support outside their academy chain, including through national school improvement organisations and examination boards.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Lawrence
Ofsted Inspector