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Mr Gary Dreher
Principal
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Rhodesway
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Dear Mr Dreher

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dixons Allerton Academy

Following my visit to your school on 20 November 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 November 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in November 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders, governors and Dixons Academies Trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the quality of the feedback teachers provide is consistently good across all subjects and year groups and that the quality of the responses from the pupils deepens their learning
- sharpen teachers' use of questioning so that it routinely challenges all pupils and is consistently applied in all lessons.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, members of your senior leadership team and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with the chief executive officer of the trust and the executive principal from Dixons Trinity Academy to discuss the support it has provided to the school since the last inspection. School documentation, including the school self-evaluation document, improvement plans and other relevant documents, were scrutinised. I conducted short visits to several lessons with both you and one of your senior leaders. Alongside senior leaders, a sample of pupils' work was scrutinised. I also met with a group of pupils from Years 7 to 10 and students from Year 13 to evaluate their views on developments since the last inspection.

Context

Since the last inspection, you have appointed a new head of science and four new teaching staff in permanent positions to the department. In September 2017, 25 new teaching staff started at the school. You have recruited an experienced governor to strengthen your governing body. You and governors commissioned external reviews of pupil premium spending and governance and have begun to act upon their findings.

Main findings

Leadership and management have improved. Leaders and governors have taken a range of appropriate actions to address the weaknesses identified in leadership and teaching, learning and assessment at the last inspection. Your expectations are high and you communicate them clearly to staff and pupils. Your improvement plans are detailed, clear and evaluated accurately against criteria for success. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for pupils have improved. You have taken robust action to eradicate weak teaching and you have ensured that roles and responsibilities at all levels are clear. The impact of your swift actions since the last inspection can be evidenced by the accelerated improvement in the quality of teaching and the improvements in outcomes since November 2016. You know the school well and you are relentless in your drive to improve the standards of education at the school. You and your leadership team have improved the quality and accuracy of the progress information collected in the school. As a result, pupils' progress can be much more carefully tracked. Leaders are confident in their predictions of further improvement in outcomes in the GCSE examinations this year.

Governance has improved since the previous inspection and it is becoming a strength of the school. You, with the support of the trust, have added an experienced governor to the governing body, who provides specific expertise and challenge to you and other leaders in the school. Governors meet regularly and have access to detailed reports. They are more confident in interpreting school

information and as a result, they understand better the school's strengths and weaknesses and ask sharply focused questions, providing more rigorous challenge. As a result of the governance review which you commissioned, governors completed a self-audit which identified specific training needs, currently addressed through a targeted training programme. Each governor is aligned to an aspect of the school, for example safeguarding and pupil premium funding. Governors meet regularly with leaders to discuss their areas of responsibility and are involved in scrutinising progress information at each data collection point. As a result, they are able to keep up to date with developments.

Following the findings from the last inspection, you and governors swiftly commissioned an external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding. You have appointed a school leader to oversee this area and together you have made great strides in acting upon the recommendations and implementing strategies so that the outcomes and experiences of disadvantaged pupils improve. As a result, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils improved in 2017. There is now a greater focus on providing high-quality teaching as well as, where appropriate, additional bespoke support for disadvantaged pupils. Our visits to classrooms and the joint scrutiny of pupils' books indicate that current work in pupils' books shows little difference between the improved progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils in the school.

Leaders have established clear expectations of how teachers plan and use pupil information. You and your senior leaders have provided each teacher with pupil progress information to inform their planning of learning activities and ensure that teaching is meeting the needs of all pupils. In science, teaching has improved and it can be evidenced by the improvement in pupils' outcomes for 2017. The new leadership of the department has acted quickly to implement various strategies, and the impact is closely monitored by senior leaders. Newly introduced systems aim to embed consistency in the way teachers provide feedback to pupils and the way pupils respond. Although staff consistently apply the schools policies, there is a lack of consistency in the quality of the feedback and the quality of pupils' responses. We agreed that, in the lessons observed, questioning was not used consistently well by all staff.

You, with the support of the trust, have introduced coaching as part of developing your staff further and have skilfully linked it to professional development and performance management. The frequent link meetings between staff at all levels ensures that the progress of pupils is at the heart of every conversation.

Teacher assessment has improved and school predictions for 2017 outcomes were accurate, with the exception of humanities. You and other senior leaders have taken action to rectify this and support is being provided by the trust. Standardised assessment across the trust in English, mathematics, science and English Baccalaureate subjects provides school leaders with confidence in making strategic decisions about providing additional support to pupils who need it. Current school

predictions are looking positive and indicate a continuously improving picture.

External support

Most of the support the school has received has come from the trust. The trust recently changed the scheme of delegation and, as a result, governors now have better clarity and focus in their roles and responsibilities. The trust has supported the school effectively with staffing and in introducing initiatives such as the cycles of quality assurance and coaching, and these form part of a wider strategic development plan. You and trust leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the impact of the support from the trust is evident in the recent improvements of outcomes for pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis
Her Majesty's Inspector