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Ms Anne Kyle
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Kyle

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oswaldtwistle School

Following my visit to your school on 07 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 September 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 September 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- provide pupils at key stage 4 with more opportunities to learn science
- make sure that governors have precise understanding of the school's use of pupil premium funding
- improve the school website so that all required information is fully up to date.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders. I met with a sample of staff. I met with a representative of the local authority and with the

chair of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I looked through a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan. With you, I toured the school and the additional premises at Hey's Court to observe pupils at work.

Context

Since the inspection in September 2016, there has been a change in leadership. The previous headteacher left at the end of the summer 2017. You took up post from September 2017. The school has recently started to use a further classroom for pupils at a site in the local community. The governing body has recruited three new governors.

Main findings

Leaders and staff accept the outcome of the previous inspection. They are determined to help the school once again provide a good standard of education for pupils. In the months following the previous inspection it took a lot of time for leaders and governors to get started on raising standards. However, the pace of change has accelerated significantly over the last 12 months. Well-planned improvements happen frequently. The quality of the school is improving steadily.

The leadership team, including the new headteacher, work skilfully together. They know the school in detail. They share and debate their insights with one another. Leaders are often visible to staff throughout the activities of the school. Staff morale is high because leaders are promoting a positive, 'can do' attitude. A typical comment from a member of staff was, 'We used to focus on the negatives in the past. Now we focus on the positives much more.' Another colleague described the changed culture as 'The roles of staff are clear. The school is a happier place.'

Leaders are clear in their expectations of staff and pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants now access training, support and development much more frequently. Staff link far more often with colleagues in other schools to share ideas and gain inspiration. Leaders' assistance to staff is much improved and linked closely to school improvement priorities. Leaders check the quality of pupils' learning regularly and consult the local authority for additional insight. Feedback to staff and targets set for improving their work are much more precise and helpful. The quality of teaching over time is now good. Pupils' learning is much more interesting and worthwhile. For example, Year 8 and Year 9 pupils were very engaged in their learning about the Holocaust. The teacher made sure that individual pupils were clear about their targets for the topic. She successfully helped all pupils to grasp new concepts such as propaganda.

Staff's assessments and reviews of how well pupils learn have been extensively revised. Staff set clear, ambitious targets for each pupil and review carefully the reasons that hold some pupils back in their learning. This approach is now much

more consistent across the school. Staff are more confident and skilled in their work. Staff and leaders now review the progress of different groups of pupils more carefully. Information shared with staff by alternative providers follows school policy.

Staff and leaders give a continued close focus to safety and safeguarding, including through the curriculum. For example, there is much focus on issues such as sexting and sexual exploitation. Pupils are encouraged to apply their learning at school to their lives in the wider world.

Leaders plan, spend and review pupil premium funding carefully. More disadvantaged pupils now make good progress, for example in their English and mathematics GCSE work, than in the past. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance at school is improving well. Even so, governors do not have enough understanding of this aspect of the school's work.

Leaders did improve the school's website following the previous inspection. However, the school's website does not meet the government's current requirements. This is because some information about pupils' outcomes and the expenditure of extra funding is not up to date. You have this matter in hand and have already secured quotes from a number of potential providers to fully revise the website. You expect improvements to be complete in the next few weeks.

Leaders' plans for improving the school have become clear and focused on the issues that matter most in raising standards. Senior leaders are well informed about the school's successes across the curriculum, as well in their specific areas of responsibility. Some previous plans were so detailed that it was hard for governors to check with ease the progress made. Current improvement plans are precise and easy for leaders and governors to use. Priorities focus accurately on actions that will make a positive difference to the quality of education the school offers. Governors are beginning to challenge and check what they are told about the school with greater skill.

Leaders fully understand the importance of the school's progress up to November 2017 and continuing this work in 2018. Leaders are determined that their sights are not deflected away from continuing to tackle the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection. Leaders know that giving pupils more opportunities to learn science at key stage 4 is a priority, as is continuing to strengthen the work of the governing body.

External support

Local authority advisers meet regularly with leaders and governors. They give leaders support and helpful opportunities to review specific aspects of their work. Their skilled assistance is helping leaders at Oswaldtwistle to improve the school with confidence. Clear plans are in place for further support over the next year.

Through links brokered with another school, a consultant conducted a useful review into the use of pupil premium funding. An external review of governance gave the governing body clear evaluation of its performance and helpful next steps to pursue. As a result of the reviews, these key aspects of the school's work are improving.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector