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Mr Christopher Richardson
Headteacher
Heworth Grange School
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Dear Mr Richardson

No formal designation inspection of Heworth Grange School

Following my visit with Michael Wardle, Her Majesty's Inspector, Garry Stout and Jamie Lawler, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 14 May 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The unannounced inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the quality of leadership and management at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the system to check that adults in the school are safe to work with children and other documents relating to safeguarding. They also met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including the leader of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Inspectors also met groups of staff, including subject leaders.

Inspectors scrutinised the school's records of attendance and behaviour, staff training records, the special educational needs register and pupils' support plans. Inspectors observed pupils in class and during social times. We talked to pupils informally at break and lunchtime and met two groups of pupils formally to discuss their learning. Inspectors also visited the inclusion room to speak with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Consilium Academies Multi-Academy Trust (the trust).

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

Leadership is effective.

Context

Heworth Grange is larger than the average-size school. It became a sponsor-led academy in February 2018. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above average. Recently, a deputy headteacher left the school to be replaced by two acting deputy headteachers. Since becoming an academy, the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders have been reviewed and amended. In September 2018, a senior leader took up post to lead on provision for disadvantaged pupils. A new chair of the governing body was appointed in February 2018. At the time of the inspection, some staff were involved in ongoing strike action.

Inspection findings

Pupils behave well and most demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to their learning. More recently, senior leaders have increased the time they spend checking on pupils' behaviour in corridors and in lessons. This is helping to reduce disruptions because senior leaders are readily available to support teachers and the minority of pupils who continue to display less positive attitudes to their learning. Following the introduction of an amended behaviour policy in February 2019, the proportion of pupils who are excluded for a fixed period increased. Although still above the national average, the proportion of pupils who are excluded has reduced in each of the last three months.

Safeguarding is effective. Staff attend regular safeguarding training, including training linked to local and national issues. Newly introduced systems to record and monitor safeguarding concerns ensure that leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are notified of concerns swiftly. Accordingly, vulnerable pupils receive bespoke support from staff in school and beyond because of the school's strong partnerships with external agencies. Staff are vigilant and most know and understand the indicators that may suggest that a pupil is suffering or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or harm. Inspection evidence demonstrates that staff act quickly when they are concerned that a pupil may be missing from education or at risk from child sexual exploitation or forced marriage. Notwithstanding this, a minority of staff do not have a thorough understanding of the school's code of conduct for staff or more recent advice relating to keeping pupils safe.

The quality of provision for pupils with SEND is improving. Links with local primary schools are strong. In this way, leaders have developed effective transition arrangements to ensure that pupils with SEND are well known and supported swiftly when they arrive into Year 7. Leaders have enhanced the information staff receive

relating to the specific learning needs of each pupil. However, the information shared by leaders (pupil passports) is sometimes too generic. For example, 'passports' do not sufficiently outline the strategies that teachers can use to support pupils' individual needs. Consequently, the progress of current pupils with SEND varies and is often dependent on the precision of teachers' planning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. It is clear that leaders have given considerable thought to this aspect of the school's work. A well-attended programme of extra-curricular activities supports the taught curriculum effectively. Pupils benefit from a wide range of cultural opportunities, most notably in music and drama. Over 100 pupils participate annually in musical productions such as 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat'. Careers education is strong. All pupils in Years 10 and 12 complete work experience. Additionally, an increasing number of pupils visit or attend activities linked to higher education and/or universities. This is, in part, one of the reasons why the vast majority of pupils make the transition to new and appropriately challenging education, employment or training when they leave school in Year 11 or Year 13.

Pupils' outcomes vary across subjects and year groups. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress are below that of other pupils nationally, particularly in English and mathematics. This is because pupils have suffered from a legacy of weaker teaching over time. While the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving due to the higher expectations of leaders and support from the trust, it is not consistently strong across the school. The activities teachers ask pupils to complete are not always well matched to their starting points. Teaching in mathematics does not routinely challenge pupils to achieve the standards of which they are capable.

Over time, additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils has not contributed to significantly improved outcomes for this group. Leaders are approaching the considerable task ahead of them with a renewed purpose this academic year. Leaders now monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils more closely, ensuring that any disadvantaged pupils who fall behind in their learning are brought to the attention of teachers and subject leaders. Nevertheless, leaders do not have a thorough understanding of the individual barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils face. As such, plans to help disadvantaged pupils overcome these barriers are at a very early stage.

Leaders know that improving pupils' attendance remains an urgent priority. To this end, leaders recently appointed a different senior leader with responsibility for attendance in addition to three additional attendance support staff. A 'parent liaison leader' works closely with pupils and families to help improve the attendance of persistent absentees or pupils who sometimes find it difficult to maintain consistently high levels of attendance. However, rates of absence and persistent absence continue to be higher than the national average. The school's own

information demonstrates that more pupils are persistently absent this year when compared to the same period the previous year.

Members of the governing body understand the importance of holding leaders to account for the effect of their work on pupils' outcomes. They acknowledge that pupils' outcomes are some distance from where they should be. Governors have introduced additional committees to scrutinise the work of leaders in more detail. For example, members of the curriculum committee regularly ask subject leaders to attend meetings so that they can ask leaders questions relating to pupils' learning. Similarly, governors participate in activities that are designed to improve pupils' behaviour. For example, governors frequently attend behaviour panel meetings and some governors are involved in supportive one-to-one meetings with pupils. However, governors' understanding of the main issues facing the school is not as strong as it should be. Some governors incorrectly believe that pupils' progress is the strongest in English and mathematics. Following discussions with inspectors, governors acknowledge that their understanding of the school's published outcomes and pupils' current attainment and progress is underdeveloped. Consequently, some governors do not hold leaders to account as stringently as they could because they sometimes accept information too readily without looking beyond the headlines.

External support

Leaders continue to work closely with colleagues from the trust to refine and develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Plans are in place to offer similar support in humanities in the coming weeks and months. In addition, the trust and CEO are supporting the headteacher and other leaders during the industrial dispute taking place currently.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and the trust should ensure that they:

- improve rates of attendance and reduce persistent absence so that they are in line with those achieved nationally
- reduce inconsistencies in the quality of teaching so that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make at least good progress over time
- provide training for governors so that they have an improved understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school
- share with teachers more detail regarding the additional needs of pupils with SEND, particularly the strategies that teachers can use to support pupils' individual needs
- check that all staff have a thorough understanding of the school's code of conduct for staff and more recent advice relating to keeping pupils safe.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott

Her Majesty's Inspector