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Ms Rachael Bennett
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Bennett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Court Fields School

Following my visit to your school on 10 January 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 governors 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:

- continue to raise outcomes at key stage 4 particularly in English and mathematics and for disadvantaged pupils
- refine development plans to ensure that the rationale for and intended impact of each action are clearly understood and regular monitoring takes place to ensure that targets are on track to be met.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, the multi-academy trust executive headteacher, groups of pupils, and representatives of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's action plans were evaluated.

I visited a number of lessons with you to observe pupils' attitudes to learning and to scrutinise the quality of work in their books.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a deputy headteacher from within the trust has joined your senior leadership team to oversee achievement and pastoral support. You are currently recruiting a head of mathematics and there are a number of teaching vacancies to be filled.

Main findings

You work effectively with the executive headteacher from the trust and, as a result, the school is improving. You have developed a cohesive senior leadership team whose members work effectively on the key areas identified as needing improvement. Senior leaders have developed the quality of their monitoring and evaluation of key actions well. They understand how their areas of responsibility may impact on and contribute to each other's areas. For example, where behaviour issues are identified, close liaison takes place to consider the impact of the quality of teaching and whether pupils may have any special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

You, other leaders and governors have a very clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas needing further improvement. School development plans are comprehensive documents with many actions planned to bring about improvement. However, some actions are not explicit on the impact they are intended to bring about. Also, regular checks on the progress towards meeting targets are not routinely incorporated into leaders', including governors', monitoring.

The development of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is led well. A clear and effective plan and rationale are in place across the trust. Training for staff is designed to meet whole-school priorities and also to support individual teachers who require extra support. Rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching is in place to determine the impact of training and to identify any further developmental needs of teachers.

During my visits to lessons, pupils exhibited positive attitudes to their learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are a strength. Work in books shows that pupils are making much better progress and their confidence in their own abilities is

growing. The school's assessment and feedback policy is implemented consistently and supports pupils well in improving their learning. Pupils' literacy and writing skills, in particular, are being developed effectively across the curriculum.

A revised behaviour policy has been implemented to address the recommendation from the previous Ofsted inspection to eradicate minor disruption in lessons. Pupils indicate that they fully understand the new system and that teachers follow the policy consistently. Pupils state that they feel behaviour has improved and instances of bullying are now a rarity. From my visits to lessons and observations of pupils around the school site, they conduct themselves sensibly and engage well in their learning.

Published outcomes at the end of Year 11 in 2017 indicated that pupils did not make sufficient progress. This was particularly the case in English, mathematics and for disadvantaged pupils. Through scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's tracking information, it is clear that pupils are making much better progress across key stage 3. Through strong transition arrangements with primary schools, Year 7 pupils join well prepared for secondary school. Pupils were highly complimentary about the support they received prior to joining. Pupils with low literacy skills are supported very well on entry to improve their reading and writing. This enables these pupils to catch up quickly with their peers and to gain the skills and confidence needed to be successful in their studies. You acknowledge that there is still more work to do to ensure pupils in key stage 4 make the same good progress as other pupils.

Governors articulate an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement. They talk knowledgeably about the use of extra funding, such as the pupil premium. They take their responsibility seriously to raise outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. For example, all teachers now have more challenging targets about the progress this group of pupils are expected to make. Governors take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously and ensure that all required checks on staff prior to employment are carried out and record keeping is of a high quality.

External support

Much of the support the school accesses is provided from within the multi-academy trust. In particular, professional development for teachers to improve the quality of teaching is conducted jointly across the two secondary schools. The school accesses other effective support from individual leaders at other schools and through the local authority. The local authority has conducted a thorough review of the school's safeguarding processes and practice. It also provides a Somerset education partner who challenges and supports leaders well through regular monitoring visits.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the executive headteacher, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe

Her Majesty's Inspector