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21 July 2017

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Dear Mr Barnes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Fleetwood High School

Following my visit to your school on 10 July 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 that 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 July 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 July 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:

- continue to improve attendance and reduce the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school
- reduce the proportion of pupils who are excluded or temporarily excluded from school by embedding the new behaviour systems
- strengthen transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3 so that the most vulnerable pupils are well supported
- sustain and improve the rate of progress and achievement made by current

pupils in English, mathematics and science

- improve the quality of teaching further by ensuring that teachers plan learning activities that stretch and challenge pupils to achieve well

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the pupil premium champion, behaviour and attendance leads, pupils and members of the governing body and a telephone call was held with a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A series of learning walks were undertaken with senior leaders. A range of documentation relating to school improvement was also considered. Scrutiny of pupils' work was undertaken during the learning walks.

Context

Since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have opened a dialogue with a multi-academy trust with a view to becoming a part of that trust. Leaders and governors have stabilised staffing and reduced the number of temporary teachers in the school. Two new middle leaders have been appointed; one as director of faculty for computing and the other as director of faculty for modern foreign languages. The senior leadership team has also been strengthened further. An additional deputy headteacher has been seconded to the school from a local secondary school to assist with the continuous improvement of teaching, learning and assessment. An assistant headteacher has been seconded to the school from the local authority to focus on improving behaviour further still. One substantive assistant headteacher is leaving the school in the summer. One member of staff has been promoted internally to the senior leadership team to lead on safeguarding and special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Main findings

Leaders and governors are passionate about Fleetwood High School. They are unwavering in their pursuit of improving the quality of education that the school provides to its pupils. Although leaders recognise that the school is on a journey, they are taking clear strides towards becoming a good school. Right across Fleetwood High School there is a sharp focus on making the necessary long-term changes so that pupils can excel. Without doubt, staff go the extra mile for their pupils. This is known as 'the Fleetwood way'. Pupils appreciate the improvements that are being made. Leaders and staff are equally determined to improve the life chances for pupils.

The governing body has also played a strong part in driving forward improvements. Added to this, the local authority has offered a whole range of support to ensure that outcomes for pupils improve. Leaders are challenged and supported by a team

of highly experienced governors. Governors robustly hold leaders at all levels to account. They know exactly what needs to be done in order to ensure that the school becomes good. Governors have a strong grasp of the strengths and areas for continued improvement. The chairs of committees hold leaders to account for the achievement and progress of pupils and the quality of education that the school provides. Governors regularly meet with middle leaders and senior leaders to challenge them about the effectiveness of their work to improve teaching and learning in their faculties. This is because leaders and governors have instilled a 'no excuses culture' across the school.

Following the previous inspection, leaders and governors produced thorough, robust and highly evaluative improvement plans to improve the school further. They have embraced the challenges that they face in improving outcomes, attendance and behaviour of pupils. What underpins these improvements is high-quality improvement planning and sharp, focused self-evaluation. Leaders are honest about the challenges that they face and they have tackled issues head-on. The school improvement plan is a key driver for sustainable change. It is well written, precise and contains clear, quantifiable targets so that leaders and governors can measure their progress towards becoming a good school.

One area where improvement planning has had a significantly positive effect is around pupils' attendance rates. Since the previous inspection leaders have improved attendance enormously. Consequently, it is now moving closer towards the national average. Added to this, the percentage of pupils who are regularly absent from school has dropped further this year. Most notably, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent from school has dropped by 10%. This is because leaders work very closely with families and they know their pupils extremely well. That said, leaders know that they still have some way to go to improve attendance overall. However, they are making strong progress in this area from an extremely low starting point. Leaders also recognise that they need to improve transition arrangements between key stages 2 and 3. This is so that leaders can support the most vulnerable pupils more fully as they start at the school.

Leaders have also been extremely successful in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Pupils now make much stronger progress in mathematics, English and science because of stronger teaching and leadership. In English, teachers' regular and thorough assessment has helped current pupils to make much stronger progress, particularly in Year 10. The quality of pupils' work in English is strong overall. Teachers use the information that they have about pupils effectively to address misconceptions to improve pupils' progress.

The frequency and rigour of assessments has also improved across the school. Teachers and middle leaders use this information increasingly effectively to plan the next stages in pupils' learning. Teachers review pupils' assessment information regularly. They increase pupils' targets appropriately, based on a firm understanding

of pupils' achievements. Added to this, pupils now take much more pride in their work. Pupils are expected to take the time to correct their mistakes. Pupils are also clear about the next stages in their learning. Teachers are much more confident in thinking about the best way to question pupils so that they deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Leaders acknowledge that this is an ongoing area for development. However, during the inspection, some very skilful practice was observed, particularly in English and geography.

A further reason that teaching and learning has improved is because leaders have a zero-tolerance stance to behaviour issues. However, this is why exclusions from the school remain too high. The systems and procedures for dealing with incidents of poor behaviour are, therefore, constantly being refined. The local authority has also provided strong support in this area. Pupils say that behaviour in lessons has improved considerably and this was confirmed during visits to lessons. During the inspection, pupils were engaged in their learning because of very strong relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils say that the school is their sanctuary and they value the work that leaders have undertaken to support good behaviour for learning.

As part of improving behaviour, leaders have worked hard to ensure that pupils value their education. To do this, leaders have focused on raising the aspirations of pupils. Leaders have also ensured that teachers have much higher expectations of their pupils. Middle leaders are leading the way in this area. Leaders, including middle leaders, have provided pupils with a range of experiences through careers education, information, advice and guidance. This is to show pupils that the sky can be the limit if they focus and try hard. That said, leaders acknowledge that this is an ongoing developmental priority and it is part of their improvement plan. Senior leaders and middle leaders also recognise that they need to ensure a greater degree of challenge is built into everyday lessons. This is so that pupils are stretched to reach their potential.

Another area where leaders have been particularly successful is incorporating problem-solving into mathematics lessons. This key priority has been embraced by the mathematics faculty so that pupils can tackle unfamiliar problems with ease. Part of every lesson is now dedicated to a problem solving activity. A local authority consultant has worked with the mathematics department to revise their schemes of work and assessment procedures. During the inspection, observations of learning in mathematics showed that pupils are becoming more proficient in tackling unfamiliar and more complex mathematical problems. They are now much more confidently building up their toolkit of mathematical knowledge and processes.

Improvements are not just limited to mathematics. While outcomes for the outgoing Year 11 will only improve slightly in 2017, current pupils now make much stronger progress across the school and in particular in English and science. This is because the curriculum now more closely meets their needs and leaders have improved significantly the quality of teaching overall. As a result of the strong work of middle

leaders and 'closing the gap champions', there is marked improvement for groups of pupils, including the most able, boys, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. It is also because leaders have rightly focused on driving up standards for these groups. In 2017, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are set to be better than other pupils in the school. In Years 7, 8 and 10, disadvantaged pupils and boys are making good progress and outcomes are improving in Year 9. This is clearly evident in their work over time.

To ensure that pupils continue to make stronger progress, leaders have secure and effective monitoring procedures in place. They are tenacious in ensuring that standards improve. That said, leaders know that they need to keep a sharp focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science to ensure that improvements are sustained and that outcomes continue to rise.

Undoubtedly, leaders have worked hard to rebuild the school's reputation in the local community. Leaders are beginning to reap the rewards of their efforts. This is clearly visible in the increasing number on roll. In September 2017, almost double the number of pupils will enter the school compared to the number of Year 11 pupils who are leaving.

External support

Leaders and governors take every opportunity to broker external support. The local authority has provided a wide range of strong support. It has provided two consultants to support improvements to teaching and learning in mathematics and in English. Added to this, the local authority has provided support through its monitoring and intervention team. Audits have been undertaken in teaching and learning, behaviour and attendance and two pupil premium reviews have been commissioned to support rapid improvements for disadvantaged pupils. The school has accessed bespoke ongoing teacher training through a local multi-academy trust. This trust has also supported strong improvements in science.

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

Jonathan Smart

Her Majesty's Inspector