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Mrs Lisa Suter
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Suter

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to North Ridge Community School

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken 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 those responsible for governance are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- further develop the role of curriculum leader
- ensure that curriculum plans in all subjects help teachers to sequence learning effectively, so that pupils build on their knowledge step by step.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you as executive headteacher, the interim deputy headteacher and the two substantive assistant headteachers. I spoke to middle leaders with responsibility for pastoral support and the sixth form. I held discussions

with representatives from the interim executive board (IEB), who are responsible for governance, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement action plan and school self-evaluation documents.

I spoke to curriculum leaders for English and communication, mathematics and physical education. We talked about how they ensure that pupils learn more and remember more in their subjects. I also spoke to colleagues who support the geography curriculum at the school. I made brief visits to lessons with members of your leadership team to consider the impact that you have had on the development of the curriculum. I looked at the documents that have been produced to help teachers to use the information found in education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have been appointed as permanent executive headteacher. Two assistant headteachers are now in place. A middle leader with responsibility for the sixth form has also been appointed. The school is well under way to becoming part of the Nexus Multi Academy Trust. As part of this transition process, the chief executive officer of Nexus Multi Academy Trust is a member of the IEB.

Main findings

At the time of the previous inspection, you had only been in post for a few weeks. Since then, you have moved the school on at a pace. Improvements are clear to see. Members of staff told me that the school is a different place now. They feel positive, enjoy coming to work and have confidence that they can play their part in making the school an even better place to learn.

You prioritise well. You have made big changes. However, you planned for these well. You ensured that staff, parents and carers, and pupils understood the reasons for the changes that you made. For example, you changed the structure of teaching classes. Now pupils are grouped in classes according to the complexity of their need rather than solely on their chronological age. Teachers and teaching assistants can now focus more on ensuring that the curriculum is tailored to help each individual pupil develop and make progress.

Similarly, you noted that information contained in each pupil's EHC plan was not readily available to members of staff. You introduced new systems and processes that ensure that members of staff read, understand and help to shape these plans. Pupils' targets are now central to what they study and what they experience in classrooms. Teachers' understanding of pupils' particular needs is now much stronger.

I spoke with several curriculum leaders and looked at their curriculum plans. The curriculum is particularly well sequenced in mathematics. It is ambitious. It goes

beyond the expectations of the national curriculum for pupils that are able to reach this level of attainment. It is also realistic, in that pupils with different needs are included within curriculum plans. Enough time for repetition is built in so that pupils of all abilities are able to remember what it is that they are learning. Pupils make progress step by step where they can. You know that there is still work to do to make sure that all subjects are planned in an equally precise way.

You and your assistant headteacher have developed the sixth form at a pace. Students are now taught in two pathways. One focuses on life skills and the other helps to prepare students for future employment. Your leaders have a deep understanding of the importance of careers, independent travel and life skills. Preparation for adulthood and transition forms the basis of much of the sixth-form curriculum.

The quality of leadership has improved. In this respect, you and the IEB have ensured that the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection have been prioritised. Systems and structures that are in place to improve and monitor the quality of education are impressive. These underpin the changes that have been made. You monitor the curriculum well. You know precisely where strengths lie. You already have plans in place where there are weaknesses. You have started to develop a team of curriculum leaders. You have plans in place for further training for these colleagues.

The curriculum is now more focused on developing pupils' communication skills and personal and social skills and to prepare pupils for adulthood effectively. Teachers more effectively support pupils who are able to develop English and mathematical skills, and teachers have a better understanding of pupils' individual needs.

Members of the IEB are knowledgeable and effective. The school is currently in a period of transition as it prepares to become part of the Nexus Multi Academy Trust. You have focused on staff development and, especially, staff empowerment. As a result, staff feel much happier and in control of both their work and their workload. They appreciate your support and that of other senior leaders. As one of your staff said, 'The ingredients are there, and we are currently making the recipe.' This is a good analogy. You are taking effective action to ensure that the school improves.

External support

Previously, you benefited from the support offered to you by the local authority. An officer from the local authority was chair of the IEB, for example. You are currently being supported effectively by colleagues from the Nexus Multi Academy Trust.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the IEB, the regional schools commissioner

and the Director of Children's Services for Doncaster. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle
Her Majesty's Inspector