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Mark Phillips
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Dear Mark Phillips

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Deptford Green School

Following my visit to your school on 10 October 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 governors 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:

- replicate the improvements achieved in English, mathematics, history and geography in all subjects across the curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders and members of the governing body. I also met with subject leaders and looked at their curriculum plans. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of St Marylebone Teaching School Alliance about its support for Deptford Green. I evaluated the school's improvement plans. I met with two groups of pupils from Years 7 and 10. I visited classrooms with senior leaders. Together, we observed English, mathematics, history, geography and modern foreign languages lessons, in Years 7, 8 and 10.

Context

Since the previous section 5 inspection, which judged the school to require improvement, you have changed the school's leadership structure. Five new leaders focus on the curriculum and pupils' achievements, overseen by a director of studies. Revised pastoral responsibilities means that heads of year check pupils' academic progress. A number of staff have left the school.

Main findings

You and senior leaders have established a well-defined vision that emphasises academic and personal development. Actions to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection are having a positive impact on pupils' education. The new director of studies post has redirected the school's efforts to raise standards by focusing squarely on the what is to be taught and how best to teach it. Heads of faculty, especially those for mathematics, English and humanities, are pushing hard to strengthen the curriculum and teaching. This work is ongoing but improvements to the quality of education are already noticeable.

With governors, you have introduced important initiatives. Good-quality external support has helped the new heads of faculty get to grips with the role. Sensibly, you have brokered support from a teaching school to review subjects and develop the curriculum. It is too soon to see the full impact of this work on standards, but early signs are positive. Curriculum planning is increasingly thorough and teaching methods more consistent across subjects. From September, it is planned that the pupils in Years 7 to 9 will all follow the full National Curriculum, with GCSE and other option choices starting in Year 10.

Training for teachers is an integral part of this improvement work. This term, the weekly training sessions have focused on the curriculum and the impact of teaching. Heads of faculty have received training to improve teaching and pupils' outcomes. They are now using their knowledge to train other staff.

A strong feature of the school's improvement work is ensuring that pupils have the knowledge and skills they will need when they leave school. The focus on literacy is starting to pay dividends. Pupils' literacy skills in Years 7 and 8 enable them to tackle work in other subjects, such as history and geography, with confidence. Focus is placed on developing skills such as organisation and resilience, as well as numeracy. Leaders are not simply paying lip service to these characteristics. They are integral to improving the curriculum, teaching and outcomes and feature in leaders' vision.

The curriculum leaders I spoke with said they are being held accountable for the quality of their faculty's work. This is an important change. Greater clarity about their role and expectations is helping them to drive improvements to the curriculum. This includes decisions about what is taught and when, and how best to motivate

pupils to learn. Curriculum leaders note that the training has provided a shared language with which to debate, agree and review the curriculum and teaching. They say that there is 'a palpable difference' in how staff understand the curriculum and teaching. Visits to classrooms confirm that this understanding is informing practice. Pupils say that teaching has improved. Lessons are 'more structured'. Time to reflect and look again at topics means that 'learning sticks in their minds'.

Behaviour, in classrooms and during lesson changes, is good. Teachers manage behaviour well, making sure that there is little, if any, interruption to learning. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. They say that behaviour is good and that bullying hardly ever happens. The school's records confirm this. Pupils feel safe in school.

The school's plans to tackle the areas requiring improvement are strong. They reflect the areas identified in the last inspection. Plans align closely to the school's vision and priorities. Significantly, the objectives set out in the plan are evident in lessons. The curriculum is being reviewed in every subject, and developing a clear rationale for the content, organisation and assessment of the curriculum is well under way.

External support

Your work to broker external support is most effective in contributing to improvements. Ongoing coaching and mentoring enables heads of faculty to develop their skills in providing strong leadership. This is already having a demonstrable impact on some subjects where the revised curriculum is well taught. There is clarity about what teachers want pupils to learn, and the order in which topics are taught.

The support negotiated with St Marylebone Teaching School Alliance is especially strong. This is a long-term initiative, not a 'quick fix'. The teaching school leader, development plans and teaching methods are all focused on getting sustainable improvements. While these are still early days, this initiative is already starting to move discussion about the curriculum into well-founded actions.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Lewisham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian Oppenheim
Her Majesty's Inspector