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Mr Tony Rawdin
Bedale High School
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Dear Mr Rawdin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bedale High School

Following my visit to your school on 13 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 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 November 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- embed systems and procedures developed in recent months to hasten further the rate of improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and therefore its impact on pupils' progress in lessons
- ensure that the development plan for the next academic year clearly references the areas identified as requiring improvement at the time of the previous inspection
- ensure that senior leaders' reviews of pupils' workbooks include checks on the progress pupils are making over time, including any differences in the progress made by different groups of pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, three representatives of the governing body and a senior school improvement adviser from North Yorkshire

local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I undertook a short review of learning in lessons with a deputy headteacher. We looked at pupils' workbooks and talked to pupils while visiting these lessons. I spoke formally to groups of pupils at lunchtime and informally to some pupils while observing their recreation time at lunchtime. A range of documents were reviewed, including the school's written evaluation of its current effectiveness, the school's new action plan, information on the progress that pupils are making across the school and governing body minutes of recent meetings. I also reviewed the school's updated behaviour policy, local authority advisers' notes of visits to the school, information on leaders' reviews of learning, scrutinies of pupils' workbooks and the record that is used to ensure that staff are suitably vetted to work with pupils.

Context

The school has undergone a major reorganisation of staff since the section 5 inspection in November 2016. The headteacher left the school and a new headteacher took up post in April 2017. A number of staff are due to leave the school at the end of the summer term. The local authority seconded an interim deputy headteacher into the school in February 2017 and two new deputy headteachers have been appointed. One of these appointees has been released from his current school and has worked in Bedale for two days a week throughout the summer term. The school has had a number of temporary teachers taking classes. Recruitment of permanent staff means the number will reduce significantly from September 2107.

Main findings

The school's journey to improvement has been recent but rapid. This is due to the changes in leadership and the decisive action taken by the governing body and the local authority in late January to early February when concerns about the rate of progress the school was making were clearly identified. Actions were then taken to halt the emerging decline in pupils' learning and progress, their standards of behaviour and to improve the quality of leadership and management. In early March 2017, some parents expressed concerns about the decline in pupils' behaviour and standards in school. However, the plans already made by governors and the local authority were being put in place, making sure that the school was able to recover quickly and move on from its lowest ebb. Actions taken by the local authority and governors, along with the interim deputy headteacher's secondment to the school, started the school's recovery and improvement by the end of the spring term.

You were appointed during that time and took up position at the start of the summer term. You have quickly galvanised staff, governors and pupils in your high expectations and your vision to make Bedale a great school. Staff, pupils and governors report on the rapid improvements made this term due to your leadership and the strong work that your interim and part-time deputies have carried out.

Pupils report that you are approachable, firm and fair. They like the way that you are highly visible around the school, that you treat them as individuals and are interested in what they have to say. One noted convincingly, while others agreed, 'He promises things and delivers on them so he has earned our trust and will not let us down.' This has had a significant impact on pupils' attitudes and respect for the school. You have consulted widely about the new school uniform and pupils report they are really pleased with it. They think that this will add to their sense of identity to the 'new Bedale'.

You know that there is still much to do to ensure that the school is good at the next inspection. However, the systems and procedures that you have put in place are showing impact already. This is particularly so in the improvement in pupils' behaviour across the school. Low-level disruption was an area that required improvement at the last inspection. Standards of behaviour had declined rapidly by the spring term 2017. You have sharpened the system to manage behaviour and made sure that all staff use the hierarchy of sanctions (phases) consistently and fairly. Staff and pupils report a step-change in pupils' behaviour and attitudes. They have welcomed the respectful culture you have developed across the school.

Pupils recognise the higher expectations you have of behaviour and see that staff are consistent in applying the school's behaviour policy. Pupils report that they now understand how to take ownership of their own behaviour and stop it getting out of hand. Staff welcome the support that leaders provide when behaviour is not as good as it might be. You are working closely with groups of pupils to develop a more rewards-based approach to managing behaviour, with rewards that the pupils will value. You know that there is still more to do to completely eradicate low-level disruption. However, data shows, and pupils report, that the need for pupils to be removed as a result of their poor attitudes and behaviour has reduced radically this term. Staff supervision of break and lunch is well planned and consistent. Pupils report that there is rarely poor behaviour at these times. Pupils conduct themselves sensibly as they move through the school and in lessons and breaktimes. Governors have noticed the significant improvement in pupils' behaviour because they visit regularly and speak to pupils to check the school's work.

In a very short space of time, the quality of teaching was assessed across the school. Consequently, you and recent leaders have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Your team have already provided training and coaching to staff at a whole-school level to raise the effectiveness of teachers' planning and their use of questioning in class. Individual support programmes have been developed for teachers who need additional targeted work. Although this only started in earnest in April, staff and pupils report that teaching is improving and pupils are being challenged more effectively to reach the higher levels of which they are capable. Pupils have already noticed that the focus on improving mathematics is making a positive difference to their learning and achievements in this subject.

Staff have welcomed the opportunities you have provided to share the good practice in teaching that already exists in school. Opportunities for them to learn from outstanding practice in other schools have yet to be finalised. You know such opportunities will help teachers to reflect upon their own practice and learn from the best. Work is ongoing to identify such opportunities.

Alongside regular reviews of teaching and learning in lessons, leaders are now undertaking regular, detailed reviews of pupils' workbooks. Teachers are provided with clear feedback on their compliance with the school's marking policy. Feedback includes information on the quality and effectiveness of teachers' written marking and feedback to pupils and whether teachers are planning to meet pupils' different abilities in their lessons. Leaders also check pupils' productivity in lessons and the quality of the presentation of their work. However, reviews take insufficient account of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress over time, and particularly of whether there is variation in the progress that different groups are making.

You have changed the way that teachers assess pupils' work, especially at key stage 3. This has been to address concerns you had about the accuracy of assessment in this key stage. Aspirational targets are now set for the end of the year so that there is a consistent approach to measuring progress across all departments. You know that there is still much to do to ensure teachers' use of assessment and the quality of teaching is consistently good across subjects and year groups. Plans are being implemented to build on the early improvements seen.

You, your senior team and governors have a very accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school because of the detailed and rigorous monitoring now taking place. Governors have checked the school's work to address the areas identified for improvement meticulously since the last inspection. This helped them to identify when the actions taken were not making the desired improvements. It also ensured that they took action quickly to secure further support from the local authority to make the sweeping changes needed. You have developed new plans for improvement but as yet they do not identify specifically enough the actions that link to the areas that required improvement at the last inspection.

You got to grips quickly with the attendance rates of pupils and found attendance was just not good enough, particularly for the disadvantaged pupils. You are developing systems to challenge poor attendance and this is one focus in the new action plan.

Governors have welcomed the honest, regular evaluations of the school's work you, and the senior school improvement adviser have provided. This has helped them to get an accurate understanding of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. Governors' systems for checking the school's work are increasingly robust and

minutes of their meetings show the challenge they are bringing to bear through their detailed questioning and the answers that they demand.

You have improved significantly the communication with parents. Weekly newsletters and regular posts on the school's Facebook page and on the website keep parents well informed. They know the changes taking place, the successes in school and the remaining challenges. There has been a significant reduction in the proportion of parents reporting negatively on Ofsted's parental questionnaire, Parent View, since March. This pays testimony to the difference you and your new team are already making. Parent governors speak positively about the changes you have brought, the good support and challenge from the local authority and the improvement in their children's enjoyment of, and attitudes to, school.

External support

The local authority has provided timely, well-planned intervention, support, challenge and guidance. This has strengthened leadership, pupils' behaviour, and improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, including the quality of teaching in mathematics and, as a result, has aided the road to recovery and improvement. The senior school improvement adviser's monitoring confirmed the governors' views that little progress was being made in the autumn and early spring term. With the agreement of the governing body, the local authority brokered, and part-funded, your position from April.

The adviser also secured funding to enable the new deputy headteacher to work two days a week in Bedale until he is in post fully from September 2017. The experienced associate deputy headteacher was procured for the final half term and the local authority has ensured continued support from the interim deputy headteacher. The adviser's regular monitoring visits and insightful and rigorous evaluative reports of the school's work contribute well to the information that governors now have to challenge you and your leaders. Governors are highly complementary and thankful for the support and challenge provided.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector