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Ms J E Vincent
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Vincent

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Childwall Sports & Science Academy

Following my visit to your school on 2 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and trustees 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:

- Ensure that the programme of curriculum development in English, mathematics, science and other subjects enables the school to provide a suitably high quality of education so that pupils' attainment and progress by the end of their studies in Year 11 increases.
- Ensure that teachers' skills are developed further so that teaching in different subjects and classes helps pupils to build the knowledge they need in similarly strong ways.

- Further develop the skills of members of the academy governance committee, and senior and middle leaders, so that the recent changes to leadership secure further improvement to the quality of education and sixth-form provision.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and the chief executive officer (CEO) and the school improvement officer of the Lydiate Learning Trust. I spoke with other senior leaders, the leaders of English, mathematics and science, and the sixth-form leaders. I had discussions with a group of pupils and a group of students in the sixth form. I also met the chair, four members of the trust and three members of the academy governance committee (AGC). This committee forms the school's local governing body.

I evaluated the school's improvement plan and other planning documents. I also reviewed documents summarising leaders' evaluation of the school. I visited some English, mathematics and science lessons.

I held a short discussion with leaders about the culture of safeguarding in the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have become headteacher. Other new senior leaders have joined you on the senior leadership team. In addition, trustees have appointed new members of staff to lead science and to add to leadership in English and mathematics. A new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has joined the school. The school has appointed an acting head of sixth form. This has allowed the previous sixth-form leader to temporarily fill another senior post in the school.

The trust has changed the arrangements for members of the local community to support governance in the school. The trust has introduced an AGC.

The school roll has increased, including in the sixth form. There is now a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In addition, more pupils do not speak English as their first language.

The school has changed its arrangements for teaching in the sixth form. Last year, sixth-form teaching was shared with another local school. Leaders ended this arrangement at the end of last year.

Main findings

Leadership in the school has changed significantly since the previous inspection. This has not stopped leaders and other staff from improving the school. The

different teams of new leaders in the school are still developing in their skills and confidence.

The previous inspection report asked school leaders to improve teaching, particularly in English, mathematics and science. As well as this, the inspectors found that the school needed to improve the sixth form. The school has made most improvement in the impact of the leadership of the sixth form. There have also been improvements in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils' GCSE results in the examinations that they took around the time of the previous inspection in 2018 were disappointing. Pupils' progress shown by these results was less than for pupils in the year before. The provisional results from the examinations in 2019 show that Year 11 pupils' progress got even weaker. This is not good enough. Improving Year 11 pupils' examination results is an urgent task for leaders and teachers. Even though Year 11 pupils' overall progress in 2019 was less than in 2018, some results did get better, for example, in science and, for some pupils, in English.

Leaders have prepared plans to help them to improve the school. Senior leaders rewrote the main improvement plan for the start of this school year. This plan accurately identifies the most important things that the school needs to improve. However, it is not clear enough about what improvement leaders expect to see later this school year. The plan sets targets so that leaders can check if their actions have worked. These targets are not precise enough to be really helpful in making these checks.

Leaders have already started to improve the curriculum. As a result, teachers are making sure that their teaching helps pupils to build on what they know already. This is helping pupils to learn even more. Teachers have used this new approach with pupils in key stage 3, including in mathematics and science. Subject leaders have already planned to extend it for older pupils. There is still too much variability in teachers' effectiveness across the school. The pupils who I talked with said that they learn a lot. They also said that their learning grows year by year.

Another improvement that is well underway is to how teachers help pupils to write well. Teachers in English and other subjects have made sure that pupils write longer and more detailed pieces of work. Teachers have seen the benefit of this as pupils have got higher marks for examination questions that need longer answers. Leaders judge that this is one of the reasons why pupils' results in science have improved.

Leaders have started to make sure that pupils with SEND and pupils who do not speak English as their first language get more support. The new SENCo has identified more pupils needing this support. Leaders have provided more time for small-group teaching of pupils who do not speak English fluently. However, some teachers are less confident at providing teaching that fully meets the needs of all pupils.

Leaders of the sixth form have been clearer about criteria for progression into the sixth form and the suitability of courses for different groups of pupils. They tell students about this even before they join the sixth form. Fewer students have dropped out later on because their studies are not meeting their needs. Sixth-form leaders have also been clearer about their expectations of students' attendance. They have made sure that students know that poor attendance will make it harder for them to do well. As well as this, teachers have made sure that the start of students' school day is useful and interesting. They have used this time to provide extra teaching about, and support for, students' personal development.

The results of sixth-form students who have retaken mathematics GCSE have improved significantly. Leaders helped students to achieve this by providing smaller classes and more lessons. Leaders also made sure that students' GCSE mathematics classes fitted in better with their other studies.

The increase in the number of pupils in the school is partly because there are more pupils in Liverpool needing secondary school places. The increase also indicates that parents are becoming more satisfied with the school.

External support

School leaders work with colleagues in the trust to develop teachers' knowledge and skills. As well as this, leaders arrange for external support when this can help them to improve particular things. This support is often provided by specialist teachers from other schools. In mathematics, staff have used such support to make the curriculum more challenging. In science, a teacher from outside the school has helped staff to make sure that pupils know and understand more. In history, an expert has worked with teachers so that they know how to help pupils to improve their writing.

Leaders have only used external support when this has added to support available from, or organised by, the trust.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the Lydiate Learning Trust, the CEO of the Lydiate Learning Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby

Her Majesty's Inspector