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29 March 2016

Mr Stuart McLaughlin
Principal
The Brittons Academy Trust
Ford Lane
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Dear Mr McLaughlin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Brittons Academy Trust

Following my visit to your school on 10 March 2016, 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 June 2015. 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. The school should take further action to:

- use performance information with greater precision, in particular to help analyse the outcomes for disadvantaged, White British boys.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, a group of Year 11 boys, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke by telephone to the headteacher of Hall Mead School, a local outstanding training school, about the support being provided. I observed learning, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke informally with them in visits to lessons in the morning with the Principal and to mathematics and science in the afternoon unaccompanied. A range of documentation was considered. This included the

school's improvement plan, progress monitoring documents, the action plan for improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils, information on pupils' personal and academic outcomes and the minutes of governing body meetings.

Context

Since the last inspection, six staff have left the school and five have joined. The leadership of mathematics, science and history has changed. Two lead practitioners are now working in mathematics and two in science. All three staff appointed in science are new to the school. The school is set to become part of a new multi-academy trust with Hall Mead School from September 2016.

Main findings

Senior leaders have begun to move the school forward since the last inspection. However, they recognise there is still a long way to go for the school to be judged good at its next inspection. Early impact is evident in mathematics and science, both noted as areas of particular concern at the last inspection. More stable staffing, improved lesson design and out-of-lesson learning opportunities are leading to improvement in pupils' learning in these subjects. Nonetheless, some staffing issues remain that are hampering pupils' further progress.

School leaders have focused their improvement plans sharply on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They have added a sixth priority of raising the aspirations of pupils, parents and staff in what pupils can achieve. Leaders view this as crucial in the school's journey to becoming good. For each of the plan's six priorities, performance indicators and milestones for checking progress are given. These include the use of information from the monitoring of teaching, pupils' attendance and their academic achievement. Staff at all levels are fully versed in the plan and there is now consistency of approach. Subject leaders are growing in confidence; they are now routinely monitoring the quality of teaching in their areas as directed by senior leaders. However, they have yet to become initiators or drivers of change to speed up the rate of improvement.

The regular reviews by leaders suggest that the school is meeting the milestones for improvement set in the action plan. It is questionable if the rate of travel is with sufficient speed for the school to be judged good at the next inspection. Further, leaders have focused their monitoring of teaching on questioning and challenge for pupils, the two areas of teaching identified for improvement, rather than all aspects of classroom practice. This has led to the school having an overly positive picture of improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The improvements in pupils' progress in some subjects, such as science, are too reliant on intervention rather than teaching of the highest quality.

The overarching headline for the summer 2015 GCSE results was positive and showed a rise in attainment, with the proportion achieving five or more A* to C

grades including English and mathematics in line with the national average. Achievement in English was good. However, it was weaker in mathematics and inadequate in science. Leaders' thorough analysis of the results showed that while progress rates had increased, this was not uniform across all groups, notably boys. Also, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils had not accelerated to the same extent as their peers. Leaders have tackled this with speed, identifying a range of actions, including a residential trip to help these Year 11 pupils catch up in science and another focused on both English and mathematics. School assessment information, supported by pupils' views, indicates there is already some evidence of impact.

Leaders at all levels now have a better understanding of pupil assessment information. As a result they are able to use it with greater efficiency to target interventions and monitor teaching quality, both at school and subject level. Better attention is paid to different groups such as boys, those who are disadvantaged or White British. However, leaders have yet to refine their use of data to pupils who may be part of more than one of these or other groups in order to target intervention with greater precision.

Observations in classrooms and of pupils' books during my visit suggested that teaching across the school remains variable. Pupils spoke of better teaching. I found too many lessons were lacklustre in their delivery and use of resources. Pupils were compliant and responded to teachers, but not as eager learners. Their verbal responses, quality of written work and pride in their work was too low. In contrast, in some subjects, such as English and history, I found classroom learning environments to be vibrant places. Here teachers brought learning to life through their dialogue with pupils and teaching approaches. As a result pupils participated with enthusiasm, volunteered their ideas and produced high-quality written work.

Since the last inspection, when it was reported that learning was disrupted in some lessons, the school has introduced a new behaviour and rewards system. This is understood by pupils, who feel it is fair and reasonably consistently applied by staff. They say it has helped to improve behaviour in lessons. School information would support this view, and during my visit I saw no disruptive behaviour. As with academic outcomes, leaders analyse the impact in particular lessons or for overarching groups such as disadvantaged pupils against their peers. However, they have yet to consider the impact on pupils who belong to more than one group. Leaders recognised that this could be helpful in identifying more specific help for these pupils.

Members of the governing body have taken an active approach in supporting senior leaders and directors of learning to bring about change. Regular meetings and visits ensure that they have a good knowledge of the school's strengths, areas for improvement and the progress being made. The Chair of the Governing Body has provided additional support for the senior leadership team through her attendance at senior leadership team meetings to offer both challenge and advice. Governors

routinely check the progress of the improvement plan against the milestones. However, they have not yet fully considered these in relation to the full journey the school has to make in order to be judged good at the next inspection.

External support

Since the last inspection the local authority has continued to support the school, in the main, through half-termly visits by one of their improvement officers. Leaders report that this has been effective in shaping and refining their improvement plans and in providing feedback on the impact of their actions. Other help included a link with another school to help improve the progress rates of disadvantaged pupils and in the development of schemes of work in mathematics. However, in my view the support has been minimal and lacked the pace needed, given the distance the school needs to travel from the June 2015 inspection to become good. More effective support has come from Hall Mead School. In part this has focused on the provision of training to meet the needs of staff at all levels, including for newly qualified teachers. Direct help from Hall Mead's technicians has improved the learning environment and resources of the laboratories so that pupils have more practical learning experiences in science lessons. Link work between the mathematics departments has improved the structure and design of lessons. In the interim period prior to the school becoming part of the multi-academy trust additional support is being put in place, in particular in science. This and other support is essential for the rate of improvement to accelerate in the limited time remaining before the school's next inspection in order for it to be judged a good school.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for London Borough of Havering. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett

Her Majesty's Inspector