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Mary Berrisford
Principal
William Morris Sixth Form
St Dunstan's Road
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Dear Ms Berrisford

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to William Morris Sixth Form

Following my visit to your school on 6 July 2021, 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(2) 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that curriculum plans state the knowledge students need to know at the end of their courses
- audit teachers' subject knowledge and provide staff with appropriate training to develop their subject knowledge further.

Context

You joined the school as principal in September 2020. You recruited two new assistant principals and a new subject leader for science.

Since the previous inspection, the local authority has set up a school improvement board. This board is chaired by the local authority school improvement adviser. The board is also made up of the principal, the chair of the governing body, link governors and senior leaders.

Main findings

You and the leadership team have accurately assessed the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders have worked with the local authority school improvement advisers, other school leaders and teaching alliances to bring about change. Governors have strong oversight of the work of the school. The school improvement board supports governors to hold leaders to account.

Following the last section 5 inspection, leaders acted quickly to review and improve the range of subjects on offer. Students can choose between level 1, 2 and 3 courses depending on their prior attainment. Students can also choose between academic courses, such as A levels or vocational courses, such as BTEC National Diplomas. The curriculum now meets the wide and varied academic needs and aspirations of students. Leaders continue to review the range of subjects on offer to further strengthen the curriculum offer. For example, leaders plan to introduce academic and vocational courses in law and criminology in September 2021.

Students join William Morris Sixth Form from many schools. Leaders use a range of appropriate information to determine which courses will be most suitable for students. This means that students are typically on the right courses from the start of their time at the sixth form. During the induction programme, curriculum leaders also check gaps in students' prior knowledge and review students' course choices where appropriate.

Senior leaders have also worked with subject leaders to revise curriculum plans. These plans aim to help students build their knowledge over time. You have made sure that subject leaders are well supported in their work to improve the curriculum. However, some subject planning does not make clear exactly what knowledge leaders expect students to know.

Leaders' oversight of the quality of education is improving. They now make sure that they have the information they need to identify where further developments are needed. For example, you and senior leaders have introduced a cycle of subject reviews. These include visits to lessons, scrutiny of students' work, assessment information and student feedback. As part of this work, leaders are looking particularly closely at the order in which students learn knowledge. This is because

they want to make sure that students understand what they are learning now and how it links to prior and future learning.

In anticipation of further school closures or the need for students to self-isolate during the pandemic, you and your team made the decision to invest in a new online learning platform in September 2020. Staff and students received training quickly and were prepared for the lockdowns in the autumn and spring terms. This online learning platform is now well established in the school and supports students' learning in and out of the classroom. Students can now access the plans for their learning on this platform.

Teachers appreciate the online platform training they have received. However, there has been less opportunity for teachers to receive training to improve their knowledge of the subjects they teach. In some instances, the number of courses and qualifications teachers need to deliver has increased. However, teachers have not received specific training to help them deliver all of the courses effectively.

Leaders have updated their attendance policy and systems, and appointed staff with responsibility for promoting good levels of attendance. These actions are making a positive difference. The extra resource and new systems are having a positive impact on students' attendance. Leaders have maintained this focus on attendance during both remote and in-school learning.

Leaders have made a number of improvements to the advice and guidance students receive regarding their next steps in education, employment and training. Careers events were planned for this year in March and June but have been cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders have set up an ambitious programme for all students to undertake work experience. This took place remotely this year due to COVID-19.

Additional support

Leaders have openly engaged with support from several external partners. For example, guidance from the local authority has helped you and your team's work on curriculum development. A local authority representative also chairs the school improvement board. This both supports and challenges leaders and governors to make the changes needed at pace. In addition, leaders have sought support from other schools, teaching alliances and other educational bodies. This has contributed well to your efforts to bring about clear improvements in students' learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, students, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I also visited lessons in media studies, business studies, art and science. I reviewed the responses to Ofsted's Parent View and staff surveys. I looked at the school's improvement plans and documentation related to the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector