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Mrs Isabel Ramsay
Consultant Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ramsay

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Temple Grove Academy

Following my visit to your school on 16 May 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 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, governors and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- redouble leaders' efforts to improve pupils' attendance
- clarify precisely the distinctive roles and responsibilities of the trust and local governing body
- further develop the effectiveness of middle leaders in improving teaching and the curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with the consultant headteacher and deputy headteacher and two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with the chief executive officer and education director of Temple Grove Academy Trust. You led me on a tour of the school and we visited classes together. I examined a wide range of documentation, including information about pupils' attendance and leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness. We discussed the school's action plan and the effectiveness of actions taken since the last inspection to improve the school. I met with pupils and reviewed work in their books with senior and subject leaders. I discussed the school's most recent information about pupils' performance with you and your deputy headteacher. I spoke informally with parents at the beginning of the day.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership, staffing and governance of the school. The previous headteacher left in December 2017. A new deputy headteacher started in September 2017. From January to April 2018, the school was led by the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher. They were supported by the education director of the trust and by you, in your role at that time, as the school's improvement partner. At the beginning of this term, you took up your current consultant headteacher role, three days a week. The inclusion leader and early years leader left at the beginning of this year.

Since September 2017, there have been changes to teaching staff in Nursery, Reception Year and Year 3. You have recruited a part-time inclusion manager and early years lead. A new teacher has been appointed to teach a small number of pupils who have significant special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

A new chief executive officer of the trust was appointed in September 2017 as well as a new director of education. A new chair and vice-chair of the local governing body are now in place and four new governors have been appointed.

From September 2018, the school's published admission number is planned to reduce from 60 to 30 pupils in each year group. The school is currently on a split site. From September 2018, the plan is that key stage 1 classes will move into the same building as key stage 2. The current site, which has been renamed 'The Hub', is intended to accommodate Nursery and Reception Year. It is also planned to provide space in the 'Hub' for the school's library, art room, music room, computing facilities and other enrichment activities, including the teaching of a modern foreign language.

Main findings

You show determined leadership, underpinned by your clear belief that 'they [the pupils] have one chance' and your vision for the high standards you expect to see. You are ably supported by the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher, who share your determined approach. You quickly understood the school's priorities and are addressing these with urgency.

Your introduction of regular meetings with staff has raised awareness of the need to accelerate pupils' progress more rapidly. As a result, teachers now consider carefully the needs of individual pupils who have been identified as being at risk of falling behind, and target additional support and challenge appropriately.

Subject and middle leaders welcome the increasing opportunities you are providing for their professional development and are responding with increased purpose to the higher expectations for their performance that you have introduced. As a result, these leaders now check the quality of pupils' work and their progress at regular intervals and deliver helpful staff meetings and training to develop teachers' subject knowledge.

You are skilfully managing significant changes to staffing and are acutely aware that these have caused concerns for parents and those pupils affected. This is now beginning to settle as you finalise staff in post for September 2018.

During my tour of the school and visits to classrooms, the atmosphere was calm and purposeful. Pupils were appropriately engaged in a range of learning activities and taking great care in the presentation of their work. The newly appointed early years leader is skilfully improving provision in the Nursery and Reception Year. She is beginning to develop a cohesive new team and has already made significant improvements to the outdoor learning area. We observed children fully engaged in their learning, supported effectively by increasingly appropriate and creative resources, for example a 'health centre' and a music area.

You are leading successful work to develop the curriculum, with clear results becoming evident. The changes being made are enabling effective links across a range of subjects, more richly developing pupils' knowledge and skills. This improvement is illustrated well, for example, by a recent science topic on light and shadow that teachers have skilfully incorporated into pupils' mathematical learning about angles. Furthermore, increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across subjects are evident in pupils' books. Helpfully, these are plentiful and of a high standard. In addition, by ensuring that the enrichment visits teachers plan now have a specific purpose linked to pupils' current learning, you are enriching the curriculum in a notably meaningful way. On the day of my visit, for example, Years 3 and 4 were visiting the Victoria and Albert Museum, linked to their current work about fashion. I noted Year 5 pupils reading a text about a mystery at the London Eye, linking to their current geography work on London, while Year 2

were seen writing about prehistoric animals and making appropriate links to their topic on caves. Pupils report that they enjoy increasingly interesting activities and are eager for more. Work seen in pupils' books shows rising expectations and an improving range of work across different subjects. The variety of work in pupils' books supports the attention leaders and teachers are now giving to the different areas of the curriculum. Helpfully, leaders now share the topics and themes being studied widely with parents, who are actively encouraged to support their children's learning at home.

Pupils' learning in science is being developed successfully across the school. Leaders have thought carefully about how to develop and engage pupils' interest in this subject, particularly boys. Pupils have increasing opportunities to do experiments and use a wide range of scientific resources and equipment. Year 5 greatly enjoyed their recent forensic analysis of a 'crime scene' using chromatography. Pupils appreciate the many scientific opportunities you provide them and are developing a keen sense of enquiry.

You and other senior leaders are sharply focused on improving teaching and ensuring a consistent approach across the school. The attractive writing displays around the school, and work in pupils' books, show that pupils are responding well to increasingly meaningful opportunities to write at length. Teachers' consistency in applying the school's new feedback policy is developing well. This is raising standards in writing by helping pupils know precisely how they can edit and improve their work. You ensure that teachers maintain high expectations for pupils' presentation, punctuation and grammar. For example, a key stage 2 pupil was able to use 'your' and 'you're' correctly in his work after the teacher corrected their misconception.

Teachers are providing most-able pupils with a better level of challenge, notably in mathematics and English. When teaching phonics, staff model the accurate use of letters and sounds, particularly in key stage 1, ensuring pupils' learning in this area is increasingly secure. As part of the newly designed curriculum, leaders are giving careful thought to providing books of equal interest to boys and girls.

Your work to improve attendance is showing some impact, but this is currently limited. The range of strategies you have introduced to improve attendance and manage persistent absence have led to overall attendance rising slightly from the same period last year. Rewards for individuals and classes with high attendance are motivating many pupils to attend school regularly. Leaders offer opportunities to meet with parents where a pupil's absence is a concern, and are taking stringent action where necessary. However, leaders, governors and the trust do not review attendance information routinely enough to ensure that actions are sharply targeted and having the necessary impact for all groups of pupils.

Helpfully, the trust's monitoring board now regularly meets to oversee and monitor the school's improvement. The new chair of the governing body has successfully

recruited governors with wide-ranging and relevant expertise. Governors know the life of the school well because they visit often. However, a lack of clarity about the distinctive roles of the local governing body and trust representatives means that evaluation of the effectiveness of leaders' work, for example in improving pupils' progress or attendance, is not organised effectively. As a result, trust officers and governors are not well placed to support leaders or hold them firmly to account for the school's secure improvement.

External support

Leaders and trust officers are sensibly engaging some external verification of the improvement being made. The recent safeguarding audit, for example, has informed prompt and helpful enhancements to the school's recruitment systems and processes. The opportunities being provided for subject leaders and teachers to work more closely with staff from local good schools are helping staff to share and develop good practice. Specific examples include working with colleagues on a local mathematics project and checking the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' progress.

The work of the educational psychologists, engaged independently by the school, is helpfully strengthening provision for the increasing number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and is improving pupils' well-being.

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

Yours sincerely

Frances Nation

Her Majesty's Inspector