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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Paul Woods
Executive headteacher
Raine's Foundation School
Approach Road
Bethnal Green
London
E2 9LY

Dear Mr Woods

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Raine's Foundation School

Following my visit to your school on 12 December 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. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in November 2015, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and the interim executive board (IEB) 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:

- quickly secure the arrangements for the leadership and management of the school beyond the current academic year by working closely with the local authority and the diocese
- strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:

- identifying how well teaching meets the needs of all groups of pupils, including the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- continuing to strengthen teachers' skills in devising lessons which engage pupils and deepen their knowledge and understanding
- ensuring that the curriculum in each subject is coherent, appropriately sequenced and conducive to high-quality learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders and a group of teaching staff to discuss the actions taken since the section 5 inspection. I also met with a representative from the local authority and members of the IEB, including the chair. I spoke with two groups of pupils in meetings, and other pupils in lessons and during the lunchbreak. I visited a range of lessons with senior leaders. I evaluated the school's improvement plan, leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness and minutes from meetings of the IEB. I also considered this year's GCSE and A level results, together with the school's information on current pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Context

You took up your post as executive headteacher of the school in September 2018. You spend three days each week in the school. In October 2018, the school's governing body was replaced by an interim executive board (IEB). The substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher are currently absent from the school. Both will leave the school at the end of December 2018.

In July 2018, I visited the school, without notice, because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about pupils' behaviour. This visit found that the high standards of behaviour and attitudes reported at the previous section 5 inspection had not been maintained.

Main findings

Much time has been lost in bringing about the improvements needed. Following the section 5 inspection, the quality of education declined rather than improved. This summer's GCSE results were very poor and worse than those reported in 2017.

Since September 2018, however, the quality of education the pupils are receiving has improved quickly and dramatically. This is because of the decisive and immediate steps you took on your appointment to tackle the persistent disruption in lessons reported in July 2018. All of the staff and pupils I spoke with were unanimous in their views that the school has improved dramatically this term. One

pupil described the school as 'unrecognisable'. Teachers have been galvanised and their morale has improved. There is a growing sense of optimism in the school. Behaviour is now managed very carefully and skilfully from the very start of the school day. On their arrival to school, pupils line up in silence in the playground. Staff ensure that they are wearing the school's uniform correctly and that they have the right equipment. Pupils are then escorted in silence to their lessons. This process is repeated after break and lunchtime. It ensures that each teaching session begins purposefully and that no pupils can truant from lessons. You have banned the use of mobile phones and made clear to pupils that inappropriate attire will be confiscated. The pupils welcome these changes because they can see that they are resulting in much-improved behaviour which, in turn, is enabling them to learn more in lessons. They also value the increased focus given to rewarding good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.

Punctuality has improved because you have made clear to pupils that they will be punished if they are late for school. Pupils' attendance is also improving because the leadership of this aspect of the school's work is much better than before. Expectations of pupils' attendance have been raised, with all staff now playing a role in challenging poor attendance. This is enabling leaders to use specialist staff, such as the educational welfare officer, to focus on the pupils whose attendance causes most concern.

Much improved systems are in place to support pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour. The Raine's Inclusion Centre has replaced the previously ineffective learning support unit. It provides well-structured teaching to support pupils' behaviour and learning. Leaders ensure that pupils who make use of the centre are there for a limited period of time, with clear personal targets which are shared with their parents.

In the lessons we visited, pupils behaved consistently well and most exhibited very positive attitudes to learning. Some pupils also told me that lessons are now more enjoyable because they spend less time completing mundane tasks such as copying off the board or answering questions from a text book. One described learning as more 'interactive.' This is pleasing given that one of the school's key strategies since September has been to increase opportunities for pupils to apply their new learning. Teachers' use of more interesting and varied approaches to teaching has supported this.

For much of the previous academic year, little was done to improve the quality of teaching. Leaders are now taking action to remedy this. Understandably, given the parlous position the school was in at the end of the summer term, they have focused so far this term on ensuring that staff apply the school's new behaviour strategy effectively and that pupils are working hard. They have also established a baseline to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers' practice. Leaders are using the information they have gathered to inform staff training,

including through provision for individual coaching where it is needed. These initiatives are new, however. Hence, it is too soon to know if they will be successful.

Leaders know that, currently, their analysis of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet sufficiently refined. Observations of learning, for example, do not focus enough on the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on different groups of pupils, including the most able and pupils with SEND. The special educational needs coordinator does not currently observe teaching to ensure that pupils with SEND receive the support they are entitled to.

My observations of teaching indicated a much-improved picture this term. This is largely because pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are so much better than before. None of the lessons I visited were affected by low-level disruption. Nevertheless, there is much work to be done to support teachers in devising lessons which engage pupils and deepen their knowledge and understanding sufficiently. This, in part, is because the curriculum is not good enough. Leaders, and members of the IEB, have identified that the way the curriculum is organised inhibits pupils' learning in some subjects. Curriculum plans are not fully developed in all subjects. Schemes of work in science are currently being rewritten, for example. My scrutiny of pupils' work during my visit to a history lesson highlighted a lack of coherence and substance in the Year 9 history curriculum. It is important that the improvements being made to teaching across the school are accompanied by a thorough review of the curriculum to ensure that it supports teaching of the highest quality.

The appointment of the IEB is resulting in stronger governance than was previously seen. This small group of professionals, each of whom has considerable educational expertise, is proving to be influential and effective in supporting and challenging school leaders to improve the school quickly and sustainably.

External support

The local authority has taken decisive action to improve the governance of the school. Following the issuing of a warning notice to governors in September 2018, the director of children's services sought permission from the Secretary of State to appoint the IEB. The local authority has also funded your appointment as well as the extensive support provided by three educational consultants. It is very clear that these consultants are having a significant impact in improving the school and in improving the leadership skills of the staff they are working with. However, barring governance, the arrangements for the leadership of the school beyond the current academic year are not confirmed. It is imperative that this is remedied in a timely way so that staff, pupils and parents can be confident that the impetus seen since September will be maintained.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the IEB, the director of education for the Diocese of London, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Tower Hamlets. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton

Her Majesty's Inspector