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Mrs Davender Bahi
Principal
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Dear Mrs Bahi

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Khalsa Science Academy

Following my visit to your school on 1 October 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 June 2017, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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 positive start governors have made to distribute leadership more effectively continues, with new senior leaders being fully supported in directing areas of school improvement successfully
- support middle leaders in checking that teachers' assessments are accurate, and in using this information alongside checks on pupils' work, to make sure that all pupils, particularly those of lower and higher ability, make strong progress from their starting points
- continue to improve links with parents and carers and to work with them to

improve attendance and punctuality.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the you, the assistant principals and subject leaders, representatives from the governing body (members and trustees), and the local leader of education who has been working with the school, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. You and I visited lessons together in all classes. I met with pupils, looked at their work and talked to them in lessons about their learning. The school improvement plan was reviewed alongside leaders' summary evaluation of the performance of the school. I scrutinised documents in relation to safeguarding and attendance, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records of the monitoring of teaching and learning.

Context

There have been considerable changes in staffing since the last inspection. After your tenure as acting principal, you have now been appointed as the substantive principal. Two new leadership posts have been created and two assistant principals appointed (in April 2018 and September 2018). Permanent teachers' contracts have now replaced almost all of the short-term supply arrangements. In September 2017, two teachers new to teaching took up posts and remain on the school staff. In September 2018, two additional teachers who are new to teaching joined the staff team. One of these posts is currently short term as it was created quickly in response to a rise in numbers.

As planned, the school continues to increase in size by one class each year. There are now 136 pupils on roll from Reception to Year 5. The school will have its full complement of primary year groups by the start of the next academic year, 2019/20.

An external review of governance took place in autumn 2017. The board of trustees has expanded by four members to widen its skills and diversity. Governors continue to explore possibilities to become part of a larger trust.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, governors have taken the much-needed actions to secure more sustainable leadership and staffing for the school. Effective support has been provided through a brokered partnership with Beeston Primary School. This has led to positive gains in the quality of teaching and learning. The vision and ethos of the school are becoming more embedded. Pupils enjoy school, have positive attitudes to learning and take pride in their work. Leaders, including governors, know that there is still much to be done to ensure that the school is the best it can be, but say that they are now in a more viable position to bring about

these improvements. I agree.

You continue to lead by example, making your high expectations clear and monitoring pupils' progress rigorously. You have refined plans for improvement and ensured that the school's assessment system is well understood, so that everyone knows what to do to improve outcomes for all pupils.

Governors have a clear vision for the school that is rooted in the school's golden rules: kind, honest, achieve well, lead, share for all humanity (KHALSA). They are passionate about ensuring that pupils have wide experiences that will support them well in their future lives. They understand that as the school grows and develops, its needs change. They have reacted positively, since the last inspection, to assessing elements of their role that need to change and develop. They have undertaken a review of governance which has helped to direct some of their actions for improvement. They have widened the skills and diversity of the board with the appointment of four new trustees, who bring experience in education, recruitment and safeguarding. They have carefully considered the huge demands on you as the principal and amended the staffing structure to ensure that leadership is more distributed and effective.

The new assistant principals show enthusiasm for their roles and are positive about the sense of teamwork that has been created. It is very early days, but they feel valued and listened to by you. There is a clear programme in place for training and support in their new roles, and also in the activities that they are starting to undertake to effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.

Instability in staffing has been settled. At the time of the previous inspection, all classes were being taught by supply staff. Governors have taken advice about the effective recruitment of high-quality staff. They have undertaken training in safer recruitment and have not been afraid to re-advertise a position if they have felt that candidates have not met the school's high expectations and requirements. Direction for improvement is now purposeful and actions taken more sustainable. Effective teaching strategies are being delivered consistently and improvements built upon. Staff are positive about being on the journey of improvement together.

Within this new team, subject leaders are just making a start on their actions for improvement. They demonstrate good subject knowledge and, with your careful direction and information sharing, are starting to get to grips with the improvements needed in their subjects. It is too soon to see the impact of their work on pupils' progress.

More stability in teaching staff has meant that strategies for improvement have been more consistently implemented. Teachers and teaching assistants have valued the opportunity to work with colleagues at local schools to evaluate and implement effective strategies to improve pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's attention to providing more opportunities for pupils to write in a wider

range of styles is evidenced in pupils' work.

The school's revised marking and feedback policy is being consistently applied. Pupils understand the direction that they are given and use time to edit and improve their work effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants are using questioning more frequently to encourage pupils to deepen their understanding and develop their reasoning skills. One pupil said, 'The teacher asks questions when they are looking at my work and this really gets me thinking.'

The school has prioritised ensuring that pupils reach the age-related expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics to good effect. Your assessment systems provide clear information about which pupils are not working at the expected standard for their age and which pupils started school with skills that are better than typical for their age. You know that some of these pupils need to make better progress over their time in school. We discussed that this knowledge now needs to be used effectively by all staff to ensure that lower and higher ability pupils in particular have the right support, direction and resources to enable them to make strong progress.

You and governors demonstrate a deep-rooted commitment to helping pupils understand who they are and their place in their world, through a curriculum that incorporates, and broadens far beyond, English and mathematics. Pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities, as well as high-quality learning experiences in subjects such as sport, music and art.

Over the last year, leaders have been working hard to create a buzz around science and to raise the profile of the subject that defines the school's identity. Many initiatives have been actioned to hook pupils and their families into the wonders of science. The school environment shows that science across the curriculum is high profile, with class displays, photographs of scientific investigations and celebrations on the school's website of events such as the discovery day and the interactive space event. Visits and visitors are organised to support learning in science and the wider curriculum. Importantly, pupils talk with animation and recall about the science learning they have been involved in, demonstrating some of the scientific vocabulary they say that they are developing. We discussed that leaders now need to ensure that pupils are making strong progress in science, building on their skills and knowledge over their time in school.

Pupils' attendance has fluctuated since the school opened. Initially well below the national average, attendance was improving rapidly at the time of the last inspection and was close to the national average. However, attendance rates dropped again last year. A significant number of pupils are late for school. You have carefully analysed all absences. You and your team have responded to this decline with determination. You reward good attendance with praise and certificates. Pupils know that they should attend school every day, on time, to keep up with their learning. You work in partnership with the local authority education welfare officer

to work with families to address persistent absenteeism. Your overall findings conclude that the vast majority of pupils' absence is due to extended holidays. Governors are looking at creative ways in which they can support families in ensuring that their children are in school and on time every day.

External support

Since the last inspection, the school has made sure that it is less isolated as a standalone academy. Supported by additional funding, an effective partnership has been established with Beeston Primary School through Noctua Teaching Alliance. This partnership has brought benefits, such as the secondment of an assistant principal for two terms and work with one of the supporting school's local leaders of education. Teaching has improved as a result of well-planned opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to work together in sharing good practice. Some aspects of leadership have been refined, although the capacity of this work was hindered by changes in teaching staff and the need to allocate the seconded leader to a class.

The school continues to access support from Leeds City Council local authority when appropriate, for example in addressing persistent absence. The school also has good links with other schools in the local cluster, providing an opportunity to share ideas and keep a wider view of improvements and challenges in education.

Stronger external partnerships have been essential to the school's improvement so far, and leaders know how important it is to maintain and develop these further.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley

Her Majesty's Inspector