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20 May 2015
Mr John Wilson
Headteacher
Long Stratton High School
Manor Road
Long Stratton
Norwich
NR15 2XR

Dear Mr Wilson

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Long Stratton High School

Following my visit with Dellis Smith, Associate Inspector, to your school on 19 May 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm 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 achievement of disadvantaged students.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the achievement of disadvantaged students. The inspection also focused on relevant aspects of the quality of leadership and management (including governance) at the school.

Evidence

During the visit, we held meetings with you; members of your senior leadership team; parents; several teachers holding positions of responsibility; and a member of the governing body. Inspectors also met with groups of students from Key Stages 3 and 4. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

Evidence seen included: documents relating to achievement, attendance and destinations of disadvantaged students; a summary of the school's self-evaluation; school and subject development plans; records of line management meetings; the pupil premium spending plans; and anonymised performance management documentation. Inspectors visited six lessons and scrutinised students' work in books and folders.

Context

The school was last inspected in September 2012, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be good. In January 2014 an inspection to examine behaviour and safety concluded that all safeguarding arrangements met statutory requirements.

Since January 2014 there have been several changes to the management structure of the school. These include a reallocation of senior leaders' responsibilities, including those for safeguarding and looked after children. There are now heads of Key Stage 3 and 4, which have replaced the previously established heads of year. There are new subject leaders of English, mathematics and modern foreign languages as well as a new leader of special educational needs provision. In addition, a review of how student targets are set has been undertaken.

The impact of leadership and management in raising achievement of disadvantaged students

In this small secondary school, a lower proportion of students than found nationally are eligible for free school meals. Published results indicate that, in 2013 disadvantaged students' achievement and attainment was broadly similar to that of their peers in school. However, in 2014 the achievement and attainment of these students was considerably lower than that of other students in the school and nationally.

While school leaders are aware of the gaps in achievement and share a common determination that every child should succeed at Long Stratton High School, self-evaluation lacks detailed analysis of the performance of disadvantaged students. For example, senior leaders do not routinely make comparisons of these students' performance with the national published performance information about other students. As a consequence of this lack of detailed analysis, development plans do not identify where the weaknesses are and therefore do not include explicit strategies to improve the achievement and attainment of disadvantaged students. This is not the case for some other groups, such as boys and the most able. The achievement of disadvantaged students does not feature in performance management targets. These weaknesses limit the effectiveness of school leaders' strategic planning and also their holding to account of staff for improving the performance of these students.

The impact of pupil premium funding is not systematically analysed and some activities are repeated without robust evidence of prior success in raising these students' outcomes. This lack of precision and evaluation has resulted in gaps in achievement widening, in particular for the oldest students in the school. Leaders have invested in a data system which enables leaders at all levels to track performance with more precision. This is a relatively new system, and the full impact of this analysis is not yet evident in outcomes across the school.

Expectations for disadvantaged students are not challenging enough. The school's analysis of the performance of students in Year 11 indicates that, while disadvantaged students' attainment is set to rise, this could be higher. The gaps in the levels of progress made by these students will not close and in some cases, will widen. There is evidence that the subject leaders for English and mathematics and also the special educational needs coordinator are making good use of information to develop strategies to improve provision in their areas. This is having some impact upon progress, for example, in English, where the performance of disadvantaged students in Year 10 is stronger. Nevertheless, this work is not effectively coordinated across the school, nor measured against explicit achievement targets for these students.

Detailed tracking data indicates that the attendance of looked after children is good and they are achieving well. They enjoy coming to school and appreciate the work that adults do for them. However, the attendance of students who are eligible for free school meals is considerably below that of others. Action is being taken to improve their attendance, but this has yet to make a substantial difference for many of these students.

Leaders manage transition from primary school well. They visit primary schools to gain a good understanding of the starting points of students joining the school. Information collected on prior attainment is shared with other colleagues who set appropriate pathways for learning in Year 7. Leaders use a range of tests to identify strengths and weaknesses in literacy and numeracy skills and put in appropriate support to help these students to improve. Evidence provided by the school indicates that this is helping to close gaps in achievement in Key Stage 3.

Not all students feel pushed to achieve their best in all lessons. This is reflected in the evidence seen in students' books, where not all work is well presented and there are variable levels of feedback by teachers. Some students, who have clear ambitions for their future education, do not believe there is enough support, advice and guidance to help them to make their choices for the future.

School leaders have initiated a programme to engage parents of disadvantaged students in the learning of their children and this is having a significant impact for these students. Parents who are part of this programme value the work of the family support worker. They report that the school is supportive and their children look forward to coming to school and believe that they can achieve well. While barriers to learning have been identified and are being addressed, it is too early to see the sustained impact upon achievement.

While governing body minutes show they have received detailed reports on the achievement of looked after children, reports about those who are eligible for free school meals are less comprehensive. Governors do not seek external validation of the data that is provided for them and therefore cannot be assured that the information is accurate. This has limited their ability to challenge senior leaders on the achievement and attainment of disadvantaged students. In November 2014

governors appointed a governor to have specific oversight of the provision for, and progress of, disadvantaged students. While this highly determined and knowledgeable governor is now holding leaders to account for the performance of these students, it is too early to assess the impact of this work on the achievement of disadvantaged students.

External support

School leaders work effectively with the local authority in ensuring that looked after children are well cared for. Daily calls to school to check on these students' well-being have helped to secure attendance that is in line with other students nationally. There are also regular independent quality checks for looked after children that have helped to assure the quality of education that they are receiving and are helping them to make progress. The local authority is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has secured opportunities for leaders to work with other providers to develop their provision for disadvantaged students. The impact of this is not yet clearly evident in the strategies seen in school.

The strengths in the school's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged students effectively to achieve their potential are:

- Recent actions, such as the improvement in the tracking and monitoring systems and the work of the heads of English and mathematics, are beginning to impact on the achievement and attainment of disadvantaged students.
- School leaders work effectively with parents and this is leading to a growing confidence on the part of students. This is helping to improve achievement and attainment in some cases.
- The systems to support looked after children are strong and are leading to good attendance and progress.

The weaknesses in the school's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged students effectively to achieve their potential are:

- Efforts to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged students are not coordinated effectively and are often reactive as opposed to strategically planned.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students is not a central feature of school self-evaluation or improvement planning. As a result, gaps in achievement have not closed quickly enough for Key Stage 4 students in particular.

- Precise targets for the improvement of outcomes for disadvantaged students are not evident in school documentation. This has resulted in a lack of clear accountability for the outcomes of these students.
- The impact of pupil premium funding is not precisely analysed so senior leaders cannot assess accurately which intervention has the most impact. This has reduced the effectiveness of the use of this funding in accelerating the progress of disadvantaged students.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the achievement, attainment and attendance of disadvantaged students are central to the evaluation, planning and implementation activities of all leaders and teachers in school.
- Develop clear lines of accountability, including appropriate targets, for the achievement, attainment and attendance of disadvantaged students.
- Ensure that a detailed analysis of the effectiveness of strategies funded through pupil premium funding is carried out so that school leaders are confident that interventions are effective.
- Develop strategies to bring together the practice that already exists in school and form a sustained and cohesive whole school approach to improving the outcomes for disadvantaged students.

I am copying this letter to the Director of Children's Services of Norfolk County Council, to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chair of the Governing Body
This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Lucas
Her Majesty's Inspector