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Victoria Hall
Headteacher
The Birley Academy
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Dear Mrs Hall

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of The Birley Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 16 July 2024, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, the deputy chief executive officer, the director of secondary schools and the chair of the local governing body the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also met with the curriculum leaders for English and history, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. I reviewed the single central record, discussed the culture of safeguarding across the school and analysed your school's behaviour and attendance information. I have considered all of this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

Main findings

You took up the post as headteacher of The Birley Academy in April 2024. Since the previous inspection, the multi-academy trust has recruited a significant number of new senior and middle leaders to help support the school.

Your school has prioritised improving the quality of education. This includes implementing new strategies to deliver the curriculum, through your 'teaching excellence framework'. You recognise that there is more work to do to ensure staff implement the curriculum consistently well.

With the support of leaders from the multi-academy trust, you are improving the curriculum. In some stronger subjects, leaders have identified the knowledge that they want pupils to learn. For example, in history, leaders have changed the order in which some topics are taught. This helps pupils connect new learning to previously taught content. However, there are some subjects where the curriculum is still being redesigned. In these subjects, there is more work to do to ensure the curriculum will effectively address gaps in pupils' knowledge.

You have improved the support for pupils in the early stages of reading. Pupils who may need extra help are identified quickly and supported by well-trained members of staff.

Leaders use a range of strategies to promote good attendance. However, pupils' attendance has not improved since the previous inspection. It remains the case that some pupils do not attend school often enough. The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school, although improved, is still too high. You, quite rightly, have identified pupils' attendance as a key improvement area for the school. You have improved the systems and recruited additional members of staff to your attendance team. Improving attendance is clearly a priority. Senior leaders know that there is more to do to ensure the impact of this work.

Your school has secured improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Leaders have raised everyone's expectations of pupils' conduct. There are clear plans in place to continue to improve this further with the recruitment of a new deputy headteacher to support existing leaders in the school. A small number of pupils still demonstrate very challenging behaviour. This results in suspensions remaining high. Some of these pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Over time, the school has not identified and supported pupils with SEND quickly enough. You, along with leaders from the multi-academy trust, have made changes to the approach to SEND. This has already improved the support for pupils with SEND. This includes establishing the new provision to offer targeted support to further improve the behaviour of some pupils.

The school has a clear improvement plan to address the next steps identified in the previous inspection. You have already addressed weaknesses in the systems and structures that were limiting the school's progress. The positive changes you have made

are not currently reflected in improved attendance or reduced suspensions. This includes for pupils with SEND. You are accessing support from the trust to continue to improve the quality of education and attendance. Governors monitor the improvements that the school is making. They know the school well. Governors, leaders and staff at the school recognise the improvements you have made so far to the school, but there is more work to do.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO of L.E.A.D. Academy Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Voyce
His Majesty's Inspector