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11 January 2019

Mr Matthew Eastham  
Penwortham Priory Academy  
Crow Hills Road  
Penwortham  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR1 0JE

Dear Mr Eastham,

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Penwortham Priory Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 19 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. It has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to address the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the academy to become good.

**Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection with the headteacher, other senior leaders, five representatives of the governing body and the school's new improvement partner. The inspector also met with a group of subject leaders and spoke to pupils during their break and lunchtimes. The inspector visited nine lessons, some with the deputy headteacher. The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, external evaluations and governors' minutes. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

**Context**

Since the last inspection, the roles of senior leaders have been restructured to give

greater clarity to lines of accountability. Greater expectations have been placed on subject leaders for their role in improving their areas of responsibility. There have been a considerable number of changes to the teaching body. There is currently a temporary leader of science.

## **Main findings**

In 2018, poor teaching caused the Year 11 results to decline significantly. However, you, senior leaders and governors have taken very effective and rapid steps to eradicate the aspects of teaching that were weak. Teaching is now much stronger across the school. Your analysis of how well current pupils are achieving suggests much better pupil progress. You are clearly taking urgent action to ensure that teachers assess pupils' attainment with much greater accuracy. This has increased the confidence that you and other senior leaders have with the reliability of this information.

Improving the outcomes, behaviour and attendance of disadvantaged pupils have been on the school's improvement plans for some time. You have strategies that focus on removing the individual barriers that some pupils have to improving. These are now more refined and are paying dividends. The difference in progress between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school is closing. Overall, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is getting closer to that typically seen by other pupils nationally. The school should be congratulated for the highly successful work it has done to improve significantly the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. An analysis of the school's records of behaviour shows that disadvantaged pupils are now no more likely to receive a sanction for their misbehaviour than others in the school.

The school is beginning to reap considerable benefit from improved arrangements to support pupils' transition from their primary schools to Penwortham Priory. Vastly improved professional dialogue between teachers in this school and their primary colleagues has contributed to recent and considerable improvement. Teachers of English and, to a lesser extent, mathematics now clearly understand what and how pupils are taught in their primary schools. This has transformed the curriculum of these two subjects, mostly eliminating any repeated learning and slowing of progress over key stage 3. Teachers gain a much better understanding of how to support pupils who have barriers to their learning. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders, at all levels, acknowledge that heavy investment in providing additional support for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to catch up illustrates previous weaknesses in teaching. The whole school is now much more focused on providing good teaching for all pupils from their first day in Year 7.

Part of the reason that the results dropped significantly in 2018 was as a result of weak teaching in mathematics and science. The quality of teaching in mathematics is now much stronger. However, it still has some way to go to be as consistently effective as the teaching in English. The teaching of science, although improving, is

not improving as quickly due to the legacy of weak leadership in this department. New and effective leadership of geography has secured good improvement. The quality of teaching in history is beginning to improve. Improved teaching of modern foreign languages is leading to better pupil achievement and more pupils opting to take a language at GCSE.

Expectations of what pupils can achieve are increasing significantly. This can be seen around classrooms, where teachers are finding opportunities to ensure that pupils think more deeply about their learning. Teachers are now expecting pupils to be able to explain their ideas. Increasing numbers of disadvantaged pupils, encouraged by the school, are opting to study languages, individual sciences and humanities subjects at GCSE.

Throughout the school, there is a very strong culture for learning. Pupils behave well and are keen to participate in their learning. Pupils said that incidents where their learning is slowed by low-level disruption are rare. Pupils are calm and purposeful when they move around the school. They attend well. During their social times, pupils integrate very well and show respect towards their fellow pupils and adults. Pupils said that they felt safe and secure while in school. They appear happy. Pupils have welcomed the new approach to managing behaviour in classes and around the school. They said that it is much fairer and that expectations of how all pupils are expected to behave are now consistent.

Decisive action has been taken to improve provision for pupils with SEND. A much more systematic approach to engaging with external agencies has improved the school's understanding of how to support these pupils. It has also given the school a much wider range of advice and guidance it can access from other support groups. The leadership of teaching assistants has improved. Their roles are much more clearly defined and their expertise is being used to much greater effect.

The community is showing greater confidence in the school's capacity to provide a good education. The number of pupils on roll is increasing significantly. Year 7 is about 75% bigger than the size of the Year 11 cohort that left in July 2018. School leaders demonstrate a desire to help all pupils of secondary age in the community. Over the past two years, four pupils have been given a successful fresh start at Penwortham Priory, when they were struggling to learn at their previous school. In the same period, no Penwortham Priory pupils moved schools for those reasons.

Leadership systems to evaluate the work of the school and plan improvements are improving. Monitoring is more frequent; it is regular and consistent. However, senior leaders' and governors' targets are not clear. They do not help them to evaluate the impact of their work on pupils to best effect.

As with all other levels of school leadership, governance is improving. Governors are becoming much more challenging of school leaders' evaluations of progress and outcomes in the school. Governors are now more systematic in their approach to

leading school improvement. Governors' expectations of what pupils should achieve are rising.

### **External support**

The school has made good use of a range of external support. There has been a systematic programme to support the development of leaders of subjects. Through the work of teaching school alliances, these leaders have gained good support from highly effective peers in other schools. Senior leaders, too, have benefited from examining effective practice in other schools. The school is currently developing a much stronger relationship with the local authority as an improvement partner.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Mackenzie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**