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Mrs Helen Acton
Headteacher
Hatfield Woodhouse Primary School
Main Street
Hatfield Woodhouse
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN7 6NH

Dear Mrs Acton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hatfield Woodhouse Primary School, Doncaster

Following my visit to your academy on 18 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, the sponsor and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- further strengthen the role of leaders in implementing and evaluating improvements in teaching, pupil progress and pupils' contribution to learning.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, a representative of the sponsor and members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans were evaluated. A tour of the school was made, marking in books was sampled and documentation about monitoring and evaluation was scrutinised.

Context

The sponsor appointed an executive headteacher from a neighbouring outstanding academy to support leaders for one day a week. Two temporary staff left at the end of the summer

term and were replaced by two newly qualified teachers.

Main findings

Academy leaders have responded actively and purposefully to the areas for improvement in the inspection report. The school improvement plan is based on a clear analysis of strengths and weaknesses of performance at the end of the key stages. Priorities are set out clearly with detailed actions, timescales and measurable success criteria. Plans are well supported by a calendar of monitoring activities.

The system for checking teaching and learning has been refined and focuses more strongly on the link between pupil progress and the quality of teaching. The outcomes of a range of monitoring activities are combined coherently in a new profile for each teacher which identifies actions and review dates. This more rigorous approach to performance management and professional development is beginning to establish greater consistency across the school.

Leaders have raised expectations by introducing targets for faster progress in addition to expected progress. Pupils and parents in all years, instead of just Year 2 and Year 6, are now informed about the level they are on. The school has also started to inform parents of their child's targets for improvement in reading and writing.

A new approach to reviewing pupils' progress has been introduced this term. Reviews now focus on the progress made by pupils rather than their attainment. Teachers have started to identify more systematically which pupils are underachieving and the actions which may help them.

Staff are clearer about the next steps in learning and these are communicated more explicitly to pupils in the new marking policy. Pupils are responding in writing to teachers' marking more frequently. Teachers are beginning to make greater use of peer- and self-assessment to extend understanding.

The school is tackling weaknesses in mental mathematics through training in using practical activities to develop pupils' calculation skills. New resources have begun to enhance strategies for teaching spelling, grammar and punctuation at Key Stage 2. Project-based homework has been introduced to increase pupils' enjoyment and responsibility for learning.

Common values and expectations for behaviour are more clearly identified. New procedures provide more reward for good behaviour. Staff have welcomed the ideas and advice from other schools and report some early successes in promoting more positive attitudes to learning.

The very few pupils with challenging behaviour, which prompted parental concern, are being helped more effectively, with support from local authority services. In addition, pupil premium funding has provided additional staffing to extend the range of strategies to promote pupils' emotional and social development.

Action has been taken to improve attendance by providing traveller parents and pupils with home learning packs while they are away; and by ensuring that their attendance continues to be registered while attending a school in another part of the country.

The forum for parents has more formal and explicit terms and conditions. This has provided a useful medium for communicating the changes taking place and for receiving feedback from parents. Parent governors report that parents are happy with the improved communication about pupils' progress and the actions taken to improve behaviour.

The governing body has been reformed. It is smaller and focuses more on school improvement. Committees with administrative responsibilities have been removed as these have been taken over by the trust. The single body has helped governors gain a wider view of school performance. They are developing their skills in questioning and challenging senior leaders.

In 2013, achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 improved. Attainment rose in reading and mathematics and was just above the provisional national average. Attainment remained average in writing. Pupils made better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than the previous Year 6. Attainment also improved at Key Stage 1 but remained in line with the national averages.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The addition of the executive headteacher increased the capacity of leaders to access models of good practice and to drive improvement. Good use has been made of links with academies with areas of excellence relevant to the academy's needs. For example, an outstanding nursery and infant school has helped the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop the direct teaching of reading and writing. An academy with expertise in managing behaviour has helped staff develop strategies for promoting good behaviour. In addition, local authority behaviour support services have helped staff to extend the range of methods for supporting pupils with challenging behaviour.

The School Improvement Officer from the School Partnership Trust Academies has provided close monitoring and support for the academy and the governing body. She has played an important role in brokering links with other academies in the trust's network of schools in the region.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the DfE - Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector