

Serco Inspections
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 0121 6799163
Direct email: lewis.mackie1@serco.com

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Mr Paul Burgess
Headteacher
Dunston Primary and Nursery School
Dunston Lane
Newbold
Chesterfield
S41 8EY

Dear Mr Burgess

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Dunston Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 1–2 October 2014 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 during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in November 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Strategic Director for Children and Younger Adults for Derbyshire County Council.

Yours sincerely

Terry Holland
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2013

- Ensure that teaching is good or better, so that all groups of pupils make at least good progress and their attainment rises in mathematics and writing at Key Stages 1 and 2, by:
 - eradicating any inadequate teaching
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - improving teachers' use of assessments, so that tasks in lessons are always sufficiently challenging for all ability groups, particularly the most able, and work is closely matched to pupils' needs
 - ensuring that pupils always receive feedback on their work that gives them very clear information on what they need to do to improve
 - giving pupils clear guidance in lessons that will help them to assess the quality of their own work, so that they become more independent learners and able to accelerate their own progress.
 - ensure that teaching is well-paced and engages all pupils to improve their behaviour.
- Raise the achievement of all pupils in writing and mathematics, including those with disabilities and who have special educational needs, so that at least average percentages of pupils meet and exceed the amount of progress expected by the end of Year 6, by:
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to use and improve their writing skills in subjects other than English
 - providing pupils with a variety of opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills to real-life problem-solving activities.
- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - refining the roles and responsibilities of the leadership team, so that they have a clearer impact on pupils' outcomes
 - developing the expertise of those who lead subjects and key stages in monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' progress
 - ensuring that governors fully put in place, and evaluate the effect of, their recent action plan so that they are better able to hold the school to account for pupils' progress and teachers' performance
 - creating specific measurable criteria in the school improvement plan so that the leadership team and governors can fully evaluate the impact of actions the school has taken.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 1–2 October 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work and teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in Key Stages 1 and 2, and in the Educational Resource Service (ERS) (a specifically resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs due to severe physical impairment). He visited seven lessons, including three mathematics classes. Five lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. The inspector scrutinised documents including: pupil progress information and associated provision for additional support to specific children; senior leaders' evaluations of the school's work; minutes of governing body meetings and reports from the regular programme of monitoring and review of the school's progress; as well as the latest school improvement plan and the local authority's action plan to support the school. He also reviewed data on pupils' performance and progress, and on attendance and exclusion.

The inspector met with a group of pupils representing the school council; the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team; the middle leadership team with responsibility for coordinating Key Stages 1 and 2, and for literacy and mathematics across the school; the Chair and four other member of the Governing Body; and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection on 12 February 2014, the school has appointed one substantive deputy headteacher and one new member of staff. Two staff, previously on maternity leave and leave of absence, have returned to their permanent posts at the beginning of this academic year.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear view of what needs to be done to improve learning at the school. Working with the help of the local authority and a successful local primary school, the headteacher and staff have continued to make rapid improvements in the areas identified by the section 5 inspection. The systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching are being embedded and the quality of teaching has improved. The small amount of inadequate teaching that existed at the time of the section 5 inspection has been eradicated. Rigorous monitoring and performance management have ensured that the targets and the initial milestones set by the school to improve teaching and learning have been met.

In all of the lessons seen during this visit, teachers demonstrated high expectations of both behaviour and what pupils could achieve. Teachers and middle leaders responsible for key curriculum area and key stages, well supported by senior staff, are now increasingly confident in analysing the school's robust assessment data on pupils' progress. This has helped teachers to improve the ways that the learning is planned and organised, and pupils are grouped, to ensure that pupils of all abilities are given work that engages and challenges them to achieve to the best of their ability. There is a consistent emphasis on helping pupils to know what they can aspire to achieve and they are given the opportunity to assess for themselves how well they are doing.

Nonetheless, there continues to be some inconsistency in the performance of teachers. The school is aware that some teaching still requires improvement and that the current picture of the quality of teaching may be subject to change as staff come and go. Senior and middle leaders are, however, clearly focused on the actions needed to raise the quality of all teaching to at least good.

Other actions in the school improvement plan to address the areas for development identified by the section 5 inspection are now also firmly embedded. This is evident, for example, in the improvement in pupils' performance demonstrated by the results in national tests in 2014, and by the schools' detailed tracking and progress data. The school achieved the majority of its targets for pupils' achievement and progress as set out in the school improvement plan. The number of pupils achieving the expected level in the national 'phonics' tests taken in Year 1 and 2 improved by 20%. At both key stages, the numbers of pupils achieving the expected levels of attainment in reading and mathematics rose and were in line with, or above, those found nationally. Although the pupils' performance in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 improved, it still did not meet the school's own target and was below the national average.

The impact of the school's work is most clearly seen in the progress pupils' made from their individual starting points at the outset of the key stages; especially given the inconsistency in their progress evident at the time of the section 5 inspection. The proportion of pupils who made at least the expected progress, or made better than expected progress, was above that seen nationally in all respects. However, the school and the governing body are aware that the attainment of higher levels and, therefore, the progress made by more-able pupils throughout the school needs further improvement. This remains a target for the next stage of developments.

The restructuring and enhancement of the senior and middle leadership of the school is now complete and provides a firm base for the school's actions to improve further in the short and longer term. A substantive deputy headteacher is now in place. Middle leaders, individually and collectively, are now taking responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and for checking the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility. They are also taking responsibility for further enhancing the consistency and continuity of pupils' experience and learning across subjects and the school as a whole.

The governing body continues to provide good support for the school. With support from the local authority, the governing body has increased the number of governors and the balance of expertise of its members. Governors have undertaken a carefully planned training programme, including training in their roles and responsibilities, in monitoring and evaluation, in the use of assessment data and in finance. As a result, governors are now well informed and fully aware of their responsibilities in helping the school to continue to improve and to achieve its aim of excellence. They are no longer, as one governor put it, 'the silent partners' but are now constructively challenging the school and are directly involved in the monitoring and evaluation of specific priorities for improvement.

Pupils are very positive about the caring community and ethos of the school as a whole. They say the school is a happy and friendly place and that they feel safe. In their view, bullying has virtually been eradicated thanks to the firm actions taken by the school, including the introduction of the 'R-Team': a team of pupils who are trained to intercede and mediate in any arguments and aggression that may develop in the playground. The

school is aware that the legacy of some previous bullying still concerns a tiny minority of parents. However, the great majority of parents who completed the online Parent View survey are clear that they feel this is once again a good school; a view supported by the increase in the number of pupils on roll this academic year.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The headteacher, with the support key senior staff, provides very strong leadership. This has enabled leaders throughout the school to grow in confidence and to press forward determinedly with their improvement programme. As a result, pupils are making better progress than at the time of the section 5 inspection.
- Senior and middle leaders have made significant efforts to ensure that staff are involved and have a sense of ownership in the developments and actions to improve performance across the school. For example, the use of a 'lesson study' approach to collectively evaluate and improve performance in mathematics has resulted in further developments to the new scheme of learning adopted in 2013. Improvements are already evident and the scheme is providing a basis for more consistent and effective teaching and learning, enabling pupils to be more engaged with their learning and to be more confident in exploring ways to solve problems.
- The school's assessment and monitoring information is very comprehensive. The carefully integrated systems that have been introduced to monitor individual pupils' progress are particularly strong and are already being used by the local authority as a model for other schools. Half-termly pupil progress reviews between each teacher and senior leaders, regular moderation of pupils' achievement and progress in individual classes, across year groups and the school as a whole, and the careful mapping of provision and specific support needed to meet the needs of individual pupils, including those with special education needs, are already having a significant impact.
- The sense of ownership of this drive for improvement is palpable among the staff. The results are already evident in lessons seen, with improved and more consistent match of work to ability, and higher expectations and challenge to pupils to achieve. As a consequence, the performance of pupils has begun to improve since the previous inspection.
- The leadership and management team has resolutely pursued improvements through frequent and consistent monitoring of teaching. This is well integrated into a robust approach to performance management. Teachers' job descriptions all contain appropriate performance targets that are sharply linked to the priorities for improvement in the school improvement plan, and to specific, relevant, strands of the *Teachers' Standards*.
- Both the school's own records and local authority reviews of teaching confirm the impact of this monitoring and support, and teaching generally is now better than it was. Leaders' lesson observations give an accurate view of the effectiveness of teaching. However, the feedback to staff on the quality of teaching could be more helpfully linked to the school's adopted success criteria and to teachers' agreed performance targets.
- The new middle leaders are committed and enthusiastic. They have a clear awareness of their leadership and management roles. There is now an enhanced culture of collective responsibility and accountability for the quality of teaching and

learning in their areas of responsibility and their contribution to the school's overall improvement.

- Observations of lessons during this inspection show that more ambitious achievement targets are being set and regularly discussed with the pupils, and that they are encouraged to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing. As a result, expectations of their performance and rates of progress are higher.
- In the midst of necessary change, the school has maintained its existing strengths in its inclusion, support and care for its pupils.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

The following areas will form a particular focus at the next monitoring visit:

- Although pupils' progress and attainment overall are rising, the school and governors are aware that attainment at higher levels and the progress of the most-able pupils and potential higher attainers, and in writing, still need further improvement.
- Teaching is improving but the school is aware that the performance of staff can still be variable and some continues to require improvement. The efforts to support these staff needs to result in the quality of teaching improving consistently in order to reach the targets set by the school.
- The school is progressively extending the monitoring of teaching and learning to involve more of the senior and middle leadership team. To help assure consistency, the feedback to staff on the quality of teaching and learning should be more clearly linked to the school's adopted success criteria and to teachers' agreed performance targets against the *Teachers' Standards*.

External support

The local authority provides very good support for the school. As a result, the school as a whole, and staff at all levels, are now better able to drive improvement forward. This is because they are better equipped to make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning, and about the achievement and progress of pupils. The school's link adviser is providing support to the senior leadership through his monitoring and quality assurance to help strengthen teaching and learning. He is also supporting leaders in his roles as 'critical friend', through the rigorous half-termly school progress review programme and through his 'in-house' training. His support to the governing body has helped to make rapid improvements in its practices. The local authority has also provided support and advice from its specialist advisers and Teaching, Learning and Assessment Consultants in areas such as mathematics and literacy, and from its Human Resources, Finance, and Governor Support services.

The link with the successful local school brokered by the local authority has been effective in providing peer support for key staff and subject leaders, and the school is now actively forging its own links with other schools offering best practice in the authority. Indeed, its own work on developing ways to better monitor the progress of pupils, and in providing the support needed to assure that progress, have led to the school becoming a centre of best practice that the local authority is using as an example for other schools.