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9 January 2015

Mr John O'Leary
Headteacher
The King John School
Market Road
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Kettering
NN14 4JU

Dear Mr O'Leary

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The King John School

Following my visit to your school on 8 January 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with yourself, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders and a representative of the local authority. I met with three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. I also spoke with pupils from the school council, and spoke informally with parents as they dropped their children at school. I looked at a range of documentation including: the post-Ofsted monitoring document; the local authority joint monitoring report; the review of

governance; minutes of governing body meetings; records of the quality of teaching and recent marking reviews.

Context

The school has been given formal notice that it will close at the end of August 2015. Pupils in the present Year 5 will be joined by pupils from the adjacent Thrapston Primary School, and the school will expand to become a primary school across the two sites. Pupils currently in Years 6, 7 and 8 will move to Prince William School, Oundle. Since the previous monitoring inspection eight new teachers have joined the school to replace six who have left and one who is on maternity leave.

Main findings

Leaders, governors and the local authority have taken swift action following my visit to the school in July. Leaders now have a strong focus on improvement and are less distracted by external issues. The school improvement plan now includes responsibilities for leading, monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions. Leaders have added an appropriate additional objective to 'ensure the smooth transition of our pupils to their new schools with minimum disruption.' The plan includes appropriate milestones and regular reviews take place.

The quality of extended writing has improved. Pupils say that they are given more time and opportunities to produce extended writing and teachers report that they are increasingly confident when assessing it in their subjects. In 2014, pupils' attainment and progress in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 improved and is now above national expectations. Conversely, pupils' achievement in mathematics declined, particularly for middle-ability pupils. Disadvantaged pupils also perform less well than their peers, and others nationally, particularly in mathematics. School leaders are aware of this and have taken swift action to ensure that appropriate interventions are in place for students that are falling behind.

You have implemented a more rigorous approach to monitoring the quality of teaching. This includes regular focused reviews of learning in classrooms and checks on marking. The school's records of the quality of teaching indicate that, despite the turnover of staff, the quality of teaching is improving. Effective staff training took place in September to re-inforce the requirements of the new marking policy. All teachers now mark work regularly, and good practice is becoming increasingly embedded. Pupils appreciate the time that is given to them to review and improve their work. However, pupils do not all respond to their teachers' comments well enough.

Subject leaders analyse information about pupils to identify those at risk of underachievement. They implement appropriate support as a result. These additional activities are starting to improve learning in the majority of subjects,

particularly writing. All leaders are highly committed to pupils' achievement and are determined to make this a memorable year for them.

School leaders have been pro-active in preparing pupils for their next school. Representatives from a motivational organisation have worked with all pupils and, as a result, they report that they feel confident about the transition. Parents are highly supportive of the school and the quality of education that their children receive.

An effective review of governance has now taken place. Governors have a much clearer focus of their role in monitoring pupil premium spending, and providing greater challenge to school leaders. They are involved in joint monitoring activities, such as marking scrutinies, which gives them greater insight into strengths and areas for improvement. The standards sub-committee meets fortnightly and these governors are forensic in their approach to monitoring progress. The governing body is fully supportive of the staff and leaders during this period of transition.

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 local authority is working closely with the school to support improvement. The education adviser took immediate action following my previous visit to secure funding for additional school support. She brokered whole-staff training on pitching work for middle-ability pupils and arranged coaching for individual subject leaders. The local authority also carried out a review day in October 2014. The results of this review confirm the progress that the school has made.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

Julia Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector