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12 March 2015

Miss Christine Meekley
Headteacher
Cheadle Heath Primary School
Edgeley Road
Cheadle Heath
Stockport
SK3 0RJ

Dear Miss Meekley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cheadle Heath Primary School, Stockport

Following my visit with my colleague John Gornall senior HMI to your school on 11 March 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 us 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 recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of a local teaching school, two subject leaders and the Key Stage 2 phase leader, and a group of newly qualified teachers. You and I visited classes in 'fix-it time' at the start of the school day. I observed parts of lessons in all the classes except the nursery, some jointly with you. I asked middle leaders to scrutinise a sample of pupils' work with specific foci and discussed their findings with them. I observed part of a meeting of the governors' monitoring committee. I read various documents including the school's focused action plans and self-evaluation document, the school-to-school support plan, the review of governance report, minutes of governors' meetings, and the local authority's report following its recent review of the school's work. I talked informally with pupils in lessons about their learning. I also spoke with some grandparents who were attending the popular Grandparents' afternoon event in the school hall.

Context

The school continues to experience a high turnover in teaching staff. Seven teachers took up post in September 2014, four of them newly qualified. Two teachers have left since September and another has joined the school.

Main findings

At this point in time, nearly one year on from the inspection that judged the school to require improvement, the school is well placed to meet its aim of becoming a good school. Actions to improve the key areas of teaching, pupils' writing, and leadership and management, particularly of subject leaders and the Governing Body, are proving effective. Likewise, the school has tackled an additional area of concern identified at the last monitoring inspection, mathematics. Staff and leaders are working very hard to implement improvements and to provide a good quality education for the pupils. Now is the time to recognise what has been achieved so far, to embed the stronger systems and better practice, and continue to encourage, support and challenge all in the school's community in order to make the improvements sustainable.

The report on the review of governance awaited at the time of the previous monitoring inspection in July has been received. The Governing Body has been reconstituted and a new Chair appointed. She is confident, experienced, and keen to move the school forward. The governors' committees have been reorganised, with records of meetings recording key questions, responses and actions to be taken. The monitoring committee comprises a small group of experienced, knowledgeable governors, together with you and the school improvement partner. It has a sharp focus on the effectiveness of actions taken by the school in terms of the outcomes for pupils. Brief guidance interpreting data on pupils' attainment and progress was provided for governors on but it did not drill down into some gaps in achievement, for instance between the achievement of those pupils who are disadvantaged, their classmates and all pupils nationally. Likewise, the school's self-evaluation did not take these fully into account or evaluate achievement from pupils' different starting points. The self-evaluation was otherwise largely accurate and captured features of the school's journey towards becoming good.

Some significant steps forward have been taken with developing middle leadership. During the visit, the subject leaders for writing and mathematics showed a good grasp of subject-specific detail in the scrutiny of writing displayed in classrooms and corridors around the school and of problem solving in pupils' mathematics books respectively. The Key Stage 2 phase leader was able to spot strengths and remaining inconsistencies in the standard of pupils' work across subjects. The way these three middle leaders responded to the scrutiny they undertook and the calibre of the discussions reflected their keenness to develop their expertise further.

At present, the deputy headteacher is fulfilling additional roles of Key Stage 1 phase leader and a teaching commitment in Year 2. The newly qualified teachers praised

her for the support she provides for them in her continuing role of mentor. Given the level of staff turnover, it is a tribute to leaders and the team of staff that the school operates smoothly. The positive ethos in the classrooms reflects pupils' considerate, good behaviour and keen attitudes to learning. Pupils were a credit to their school. Many now come in early in the morning for 'fix-it' time to respond to teachers' helpful comments in their books. During a short visit to the Reception classes, inspectors noticed that these younger children concentrated well when working with adults but, at other times, tended to flit from one activity to another.

The quality of pupils' writing continues to improve. Presentation is generally of a high standard. Pupils' writing at length and for different purposes within the half-termly topics shows improvement overall but is not yet of a consistently high standard. Sometimes, such opportunities are presented or structured in ways that do not challenge pupils' writing and comprehension skills sufficiently.

The quality of teaching is improving, not only as teachers become more experienced and settled into life at the school and meeting leaders' expectations, but also through the professional development they receive. Mathematics is a key focus for the school. The action plan places an appropriately strong emphasis on the aims of the new national curriculum (fluency, mathematical reasoning and problem solving). As headteacher, you drew effectively on educational research before embarking on major changes to how mathematics is taught throughout the school. Teaching is making increasingly good use of practical apparatus and mathematical models to develop pupils' understanding and reasoning skills.

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 school is making the most of a range of well-focused external support. You realise that as the school improves it needs to be able to stand on its own two feet and therefore the focus of support is a blend of building middle leadership capacity and improving teaching and learning. An external consultant supports work in English. In mathematics, a specialist leader of education from a local teaching school is helping to develop teachers' and the subject leader's expertise as part of school-to-school support. The local authority conducted a review recently. Its report reflects positively the school's improving effectiveness. You are appreciative of the support from the local authority and the school improvement partner.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Stockport and as below.

Yours sincerely

Jane Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]
- For free schools, UTCs and studio schools [open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school is a non-maintained special school [hns.efa@education.gsi.gov.uk]