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Mrs Joanne Wetherell
Headteacher
Newlands Primary School
Dumpton Lane
Ramsgate
CT11 7AJ

Dear Mrs Wetherell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Newlands Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 April 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 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. The school should take further action to:

- strengthen the school improvement plans so governors and school leaders can evaluate the impact of their actions against outcomes for pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior team, middle leaders, a governor and representatives from The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. You took me on a tour of the school and I visited each class. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. I also looked at some pupils' books.

Context

The governing body was reconstituted in February 2015.

Main findings

You and your leadership team are working diligently and methodically to bring about necessary improvements. You have rightly concentrated on improving the quality of teaching and learning and you acted quickly by issuing clear expectations for all staff and pupils. These higher expectations are having a positive impact on the behaviour and progress of pupils throughout the school.

Following the previous inspection, you used a range of ways to identify weaknesses in the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling. This was followed by well-directed training for teachers and teaching assistants. Lessons were reorganised to provide a specific time every day when pupils focus on improving their spelling and punctuation. During my tour of the school, pupils in many classes were keen to show me how they were using punctuation accurately to improve their written work. Leaders check that when teachers mark pupils' work they identify errors in spelling and punctuation and that pupils then correct their work. However, school leaders are not regularly gathering information about the attainment of pupils in English, grammar, punctuation and spelling. This makes it difficult for them to check that actions to improve these skills are raising standards.

At the beginning of this academic year you introduced a new curriculum based around topic work. This is now giving pupils more opportunities to write at length and link ideas. Frequent trips and visitors to the school inspire pupils and act as a stimulus for creative writing. There is also a new emphasis on storytelling throughout the school. As a result, pupils are writing more deeply and developing their use of language.

Teachers regularly assess how well pupils are progressing in reading, writing and mathematics. Together with colleagues from partner schools, leaders compare pupils' work to check the accuracy of assessments. Representatives from the local authority and TKAT have also verified your judgements about the standards reached. You are confident that teachers provide reliable information about pupils' achievement. When pupils are identified as not making enough progress, effective plans are drawn up to address their individual learning needs, including additional classes. Currently, school data indicates that pupils in Year 6 are on course for improved results in 2015.

School leaders have shown determination to raise expectations of the most able pupils in literacy and mathematics. There has been a greater focus on problem solving during mathematics lessons and in pupils' topic work. In all year groups, once basic reading skills are securely in place, there is a greater emphasis on improving pupils' comprehension. As a result, school data shows more pupils in Year 6 are achieving the higher levels in mathematics and reading.

Although school leaders and TKAT are closely monitoring the progress of pupils against end of year targets, these measures are not woven into school improvement plans. The school's plans are linked to priorities identified by the last inspection and outline appropriate actions to take. However, they do not explain clearly enough how the actions are expected to raise standards to meet the school's targets. The school plans would be more robust if they were more closely aligned to TKAT plans. This would also make it easier for governors to judge how successful school leaders have been in improving teaching and raising standards.

Following the inspection, you acted decisively to improve pupils' behaviour. A ten-point plan to improve behaviour during lessons was introduced. School leaders visit classes every day to check how well this is working. Your records show that low level disruption has reduced and is now infrequent. During my visit to classrooms, the atmosphere was purposeful; pupils were well behaved and appropriately involved in a range of learning activities. You have increased supervision during playtimes and steps are in place to further improve behaviour during lunchtime by introducing more structured activities.

Governors have reviewed the way they work and are making the most of training to develop their skills. Through visits to the school they recognise an urgency and commitment among staff to address areas for improvement. The new governing body has only met once, but their plans show a determination to increase the level of challenge for the leadership team.

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 receives effective support from TKAT. Teachers and leaders have benefited from the support of a local group of TKAT schools. Middle leaders are developing their skills and confidence through leadership training and working alongside TKAT representatives in school. The headteacher is held to account through regular meetings to review a range of performance indicators, including those related to pupil progress, attendance and the quality of teaching. A representative of the local authority has also worked effectively with school leaders and teachers to improve the quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

