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Miss Tyte
Headteacher
Chester Park Infant School
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Dear Miss Tyte

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chester Park Infant School

Following my visit to your school on Tuesday 2 June 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 January 2015. 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:

- ensure that the work to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of the more able continues to have a clear and measurable impact in improving the achievement of all pupils.
- use the recent findings of the external review of governance to develop further the work of the governing body in evaluating the performance of the school and supporting improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, a group of senior and middle leaders, three governors, including the Chair of Governors, a representative from the local authority and the Local Leader of Education (LLE) who is supporting the school. Informal conversations took place with pupils in lessons and during the lunchtime break. Together, we looked at some pupils' workbooks and discussed a range of individual case studies. We also sampled a number of 'learning diaries' from Reception and discussed children's skills on entry into school.

Context

There have been no staff changes since the inspection. A significant proportion of teachers are leaving at the end of this academic year. All vacancies have been filled ready for September.

Main findings

The inspection judgement of 'requires improvement' came as a huge shock to you, your senior team, governors, parents and the local authority. However, in true 'Chester Park Infant' style, the school community, supported by other schools and local authority officials, have wasted no time in planning improvements and putting them quickly into place.

The need to address pupils' inconsistent achievement in writing and mathematics has prompted you and your teachers to make timetable changes so that key literacy and numeracy skills can be practised in depth. For some English and mathematics sessions, pupils are taught in groups according to their ability. This is helping teachers to set more challenging work to better meet the needs of all pupils, including the more able.

Your school already prides itself on its rich curriculum and this is being used to further develop challenging learning opportunities for all pupils. A broad range of topics are used to develop pupils' understanding and make sure that they can apply the knowledge that they gain. For example, when they made 'Mini-Me' models and designed different vehicles to transport them around the playground, they applied their knowledge of space, shape and measurement. Your teachers continue to organise visits and outings which motivate the pupils and give them opportunities they might not otherwise experience. For instance, trips to the zoo are not just used to learn about animals but used to promote fractions and extend their mathematical thinking through "zoomeracy" activities. Pupils are fascinated by visitors who come into school to talk about their hobbies and professions. This is helping to bring writing sessions alive and encourage the pupils to write more creatively. In particular, a talk by a visitor, who brought along an owl and a hedgehog, really enthused the children who responded by writing about it at great length. By extending opportunities available in the outdoor area, younger children are actively

engaging in practicing their writing. This was seen when a group of Reception children queued in an orderly fashion to join their 'gym' which required a detailed form to be filled in when joining.

You and your teaching staff know all your pupils very well and are clear about the impact that any additional funding has upon individuals. Nevertheless, you and your leaders have increased the number of ways that you check on how well each child is doing. These progress checks have become more frequent and the information gathered is fed into a more effective system which quickly analyses the gains made by different groups of pupils. Pupils have a clearer understanding of what they are going to learn in lessons and are given ways to check what they have learnt. Pupils are responding well to the school's policy of using time in the morning for them to act upon any feedback on their work. They say this helps them understand what they need to do to improve their learning.

Pupils really enjoy their lessons and persevere with new learning. They are well-focused during sessions and enthusiastic about what they are doing. One group of Reception children eagerly took part in acting out 'The Enormous Turnip' and as a result could confidently recount the story out loud to others. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and work well with each other. Older pupils sensibly discuss their learning and respond well to detailed questions.

Your teachers are very focused on improvement and are continuing to work on their 'Collaborative Approach to Professional Development' which is known as 'CALT'. This involves teachers observing each other, giving feedback and modelling lessons. The outcomes from lesson observations and the sampling of class workbooks are now analysed precisely and fed back into individual teacher 'performance improvement plans'. Teachers appreciate having their points for development available in one document and find it a helpful guide towards setting and working towards their individual performance and improvement targets.

The detailed school improvement plan is aligned to the areas for development identified at the inspection and is clearly linked to improving pupils' achievement. The success of the plan can be measured accurately because there are key indicators to monitor the journey of improvement. Governors are very proud of the school and have been heavily involved in the development of the improvement plan. This has reinforced their team work with senior leaders. Governors have made some tweaks to tighten up the work they do to support and challenge the senior leaders. Individual governors have developed links with subject leaders and now have a deeper understanding of the strengths and areas requiring improvement. By ensuring the minutes of governing body meetings are much clearer and now note specific actions to be taken and by whom, they are carrying out their role with greater rigour. The recent review of governance suggested a number of ways forward to increase their efficiency. This included fine-tuning support for new governors, introducing more visits into school and further developing their skills in the analysis of data.

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

Senior leaders have been right to maintain the strong links of support and challenge which are shared with a group of four Bristol infant schools. The headteacher from one of these schools is an LLE and she is providing any support you have requested. The local education authority has funded specialist advice and guidance to teach the more able. A specialist mathematics teacher is also advising teaching staff on ways to further develop the mathematical skills of the pupils. A visit undertaken by the school improvement adviser shortly after the inspection reaffirmed the school's view that pupils' respond well to the teaching and enjoy their active learning. The local authority are eager to support any other issues which can raise the confidence of the teaching staff and help them to ensure that all who work and learn here achieve well.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector