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10 June 2015

Ms Donna Roberts
Headteacher
Orchard Meadow Primary School
Wesley Close
Oxford
OX4 6BG

Dear Ms Roberts

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Orchard Meadow Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 June 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, your senior leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative of the trustees, and made short visits to the early years setting and classes in Key Stages 1 and 2.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the Local Advisory Board has been replaced by a smaller governing body working as an IEB. The Chair of the IEB has been in post for one week. Three trustees of the Blackbird Academy Trust sit on the new IEB. Just after Easter 2015, two new assistant headteachers were appointed; one was previously a class teacher. A full-time Year 2 teacher and part-time Year 3 teacher also joined the academy.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

You, your leaders and the executive headteacher are dedicated to improving the academy as quickly as possible. You and the executive headteacher have made changes to the leadership team that are beginning to have a positive impact, especially in Key Stage 2, where the teaching is stronger than in Key Stage 1. You recognise that improvement has been slowest in the early years setting because there is currently no senior leader with early years expertise. You have made good use of external support from the local authority, whose consultants have helped you to write an action plan focused on improving the early years provision. You have swiftly implemented recommendations from the review of how the academy uses additional pupil premium funding. Strengthened governance arrangements mean you and your leaders are now being more robustly challenged.

You and your leaders have introduced effective new approaches to teaching reading and writing and further strengthened the way mathematics is taught. You are wisely monitoring teachers' planning more carefully and regularly. This helps you to ensure teachers' plans focus on the areas for improvement identified in the recent Ofsted report, as well as on the new teaching approaches. These new approaches are being used to better effect in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. Some teachers in Key Stage 1 do not provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils, which slows their progress. For example, a pupil in Year 2 worked out the differences between two three-dimensional shapes more quickly than her peers but the teacher did not provide her with additional challenge.

The newly appointed assistant headteacher has worked with the local authority early years consultant to develop more effective approaches to the way play activities are organised. These new approaches are not yet being employed across all areas of the early years setting. Some children, mainly but not solely boys, in both Nursery and Reception, spend too much time playing games that do not further their learning. Moreover, some teaching assistants do not fully exploit opportunities to develop children's learning by asking probing questions about their play. The new assistant headteacher has robust plans in place to monitor more effectively whether improvements are being promptly instigated by all early years staff.

Following a thorough review of how the academy uses additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, leaders now systematically gather evidence to show the impact of all the extra activities accessed by this group. Leaders carefully analyse this information to identify pupils whose progress remains slow. The assistant headteachers have started to provide extra numeracy and literacy help to this group of pupils. As a result, the gap between their achievement and that of others is beginning to close.

Trustees have swiftly implemented the key recommendations from the review of governance. A new, leaner IEB has recently been established. The Chair of the IEB has a deep understanding of what changes need to be made because she conducted

the review of governance. Despite only being in post for one week, the chair has created an effective short-term action plan which details how governors will make a better contribution to improving the school. This plan focuses on strengthening the way they monitor the impact of leaders' actions. Trustees are currently refining the way they hold the IEB to account for the progress the academy makes. However, this aspect of governance is not yet strong enough.

The trustees' statement of action is fit for purpose. It contains the academy's comprehensive improvement plan within it. The actions are prioritised appropriately and closely link to the areas for improvement from the previous inspection report. It is clear what the expected impact of intended actions is at given milestones on the academy's journey out of serious weaknesses. However, minor adjustments are required so the detailed section on how leaders, governors and trustees will check the impact of the plan is more closely linked to the proposed actions.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's improvement action plan is fit for purpose

The trustees' statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, and the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector