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John Withers
Headteacher
Landywood Primary School
Holly Lane
Landywood
Walsall
WS6 6AQ

Dear Mr Withers

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Landywood Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 February 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection in February 2013 the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- devise a school improvement plan which has a strong focus on raising achievement over time. It should have realistic, measurable milestones and clear success criteria so that progress can easily be evaluated
- embed systems to use achievement data to monitor the quality of teaching over time
- ensure that governors have the skills, information and training to hold the headteacher to close account
- ensure the review takes place and then act upon the recommendations of the external review of the use of pupil premium in order to improve achievement of disadvantaged pupils

- build upon the improvements in the quality of teaching by ensuring that the most effective practice continues to be shared particularly with new staff who join in September 2015.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, phase leaders, a representative of the local authority and three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Actions taken since the last inspection were discussed and the school's statement of action was evaluated. Other documents including records related to the management of the performance of teachers, the single central record and minutes of governing body meetings were scrutinised. Visits were also made to every classroom with the headteacher. Brief discussions were held with pupils and work and displays were looked at.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the school's context since the previous inspection. However, six teachers are leaving at the end of this academic year. Two newly qualified teachers have been appointed and school leaders are in the process of filling other vacancies.

Main findings

The school's statement of action covers the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report and lists specific action that will take place this term. However, there is no sense of a longer term plan, the purpose of these activities is not clear and measurable milestones are not in place. Governors did not contribute to the development of the plan and they are not monitoring its progress, impact or whether activities have been completed. Consequently, some of the actions which should have taken place this term have not happened.

Members of the governing body are unable to hold the headteacher to close account as they do not have skills or all the information that they need to do this. Consequently, they are not fully aware of the impact of some of the actions taken. They visit the school regularly and staff and governors value the input of governors who are linked to particular phases. Governors are able to hold phase leaders to closer account through regular contact and report back to other governors what is happening in their areas. Members of the governing body receive reports which cover the relevant areas in meetings and use questions to challenge the headteacher.

After the last inspection, a governor assumed the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Initial plans are being discussed to monitor the impact of this additional funding but governors are unclear about its use and impact in the past. An external review of the use of pupil premium is due to take place later this term.

School leaders have looked closely at the use and impact of their use of sports funding and they are using it more effectively to develop the skills of class teachers.

Older pupils are becoming increasingly confident as play leaders and plans are in place to create sports leaders in next year's Year 6.

Teachers have opportunities to share effective practice and evidence seen in pupils' books and during the short visits to classrooms indicate that pupils are involved in tasks that interest and engage them. They are beginning to be given more opportunities to practise new skills and they are able to talk confidently about their learning. Improvements in teaching and achievement, mentioned in the last inspection report, have been maintained but, from a starting point which is below the national average, leaders are predicting low achievement in the current Year 6. Leaders are starting to use information about progress and attainment to help them evaluate the quality of teaching over time. However, this is not yet embedded.

Classrooms have attractive and useful displays to help pupils' learning. Pupils were observed working productively in whole class activities, in small groups, in pairs and individually. They worked equally as well for all members of staff. Behaviour observed during the inspection was good, pupils behaved in a safe way and the aspects of safeguarding that were considered met requirements.

External support

The local authority officer linked to the school is fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. She visits the school regularly, carries out evaluation activities, such as work scrutinies and lesson observations, and has worked with the phase leaders to further refine their skills to monitor and improve their areas. Effective support has been commissioned to improve outcomes in English and mathematics and the Chair of the Governing Body has benefited from support from a National Leader of Governance. A National Leader of Education (NLE) from the Federation of Mary Howard and St Andrew's primary schools has been commissioned to work with the headteacher. The NLE helped to construct the school's statement of action.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley
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