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Mrs Penny France
Headteacher
Mosscroft Primary School
Bedford Close
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Merseyside
L36 1XH

Dear Mrs France

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mosscroft Primary School, Knowsley

Following my visit to your school on 3 July 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 May 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:

- review the post Ofsted action plan so that it outlines a clear and measurable route to improving the quality of teaching; allowing you and governors to check if your actions are on track to be successful
- develop the skills of middle leaders so that they are able to play a significant role in school improvement
- plan professional development for teachers by identifying strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching through a robust and systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, students and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Documents were scrutinised including: the school development plan and records of your checks on teaching. I also visited each classroom with you and the acting deputy headteacher to speak to pupils, look at their books and observe their learning.

Context

The deputy headteacher is currently on maternity leave.

Main findings

The recent inspection confirmed your own assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You have utilised the short period of time available to you since the inspection to introduce changes that have resulted in a number of 'quick fixes'. As a result, you have created a momentum, amongst the school community, towards the more substantive changes that you have planned.

Following advice from the local authority, your plan for improvement has been completed relatively recently. It has some strengths including a succinct summary of the school's current position and clearly demonstrates your appetite to bring about rapid change. However, some areas lack clarity and do not clearly communicate a course for improvement. Several of your planned actions do not have suitable measurable success criteria or milestones that allow you, senior leaders or governors to check if your improvements are on track. Furthermore, the role of governors in holding you to account and checking on the progress of actions is not clear.

You have wasted no time in raising the expectations of pupils and teachers. The swift introduction of a 'presentation promise' has brought immediate improvements in pupils' presentation in their books. Teachers across the school now model and teach cursive handwriting to all pupils from Year 1 onwards. The quality of many pupils' work has been transformed. Pupils say that they are proud of their work and are motivated to produce writing to the best of their ability.

You identified that low level disruption during English lessons was hampering the progress of some pupils' writing skills. As a result you have implemented a new behaviour strategy across the school. While it is too early to measure any impact reliably, pupils are fulsome in their praise of the change. They say that behaviour in lessons is calm and consequently learning has improved.

Teachers across the school are showing their determination to embrace the changes you are introducing. The updated marking and feedback policy has been widely adopted across the school. Displays such as seen in the Year 5 classroom for

instance, remind pupils what symbols in their feedback mean. Pupils say that teachers' marking is now helping them to understand what they need to do to improve their work. They also speak positively about 'fix it fast time' when they have the opportunity to review their work to improve it or tackle extra challenges that their teacher has set them.

You are using your literacy expertise to begin to support colleagues to improve the quality of their teaching. You have undertaken joint lesson planning and modelled a small number of lessons. This support is at an early stage so any impact is not fully evident. Your understanding of what needs to be done further to improve the quality of teaching is hampered. This is because there is no robust system in place for regularly checking on the quality of teaching across the school. In the past, feedback to teachers has not been as useful as it could be. This is because it has focussed on areas such as compliance of school policies rather than on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.

Middle leaders have not had an impact on school improvement since the inspection. While they have attended a local network meeting other opportunities for them to develop their skills or play their role in school improvement have not been grasped. The resulting lack of distributed leadership across the school has contributed to some improvements not moving forward as quickly as they could and others being implemented inconsistently.

Some teachers are leading the way and continue to set high expectations of what pupils can achieve. In the Reception year group for example, assessment is used effectively to plan activities that build upon children's interests and skills. Nonetheless, there is still much to do to ensure that pockets of strengths in the quality of teaching are built upon to sustain improvements consistently across the school.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

You have recently taken the opportunity to visit another local primary school to look at the quality of pupils' writing. As a result you have planned a joint staff meeting so that expertise can be shared. The local authority has undertaken a review of school effectiveness. As a result of their findings a number of actions have been agreed.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Bell

Her Majesty's Inspector