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Mr Paul Burgess
Headteacher
Dunston Primary and Nursery School
Dunston Lane
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Dear Mr Burgess

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dunston Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 13 November 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, three subject leaders, four representatives of the governing body, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your plans for improvement. I reviewed your most recent information on pupils' progress and attainment. I also scrutinised documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We conducted a tour of the school together and visited all classes to see pupils and staff at work.

Context

Since the recent inspection, two new teachers and a senior leader with responsibility for Key Stage 2 have been appointed. A new Chair of the Governing Body took up post in October 2015.

Main findings

You, your senior leadership team and governors have acted swiftly to tackle the areas identified for improvement at the recent inspection. Your cycle for monitoring and evaluation links tightly to the priorities for improvement.

You have reviewed the school's safeguarding and other related policies as a matter of urgency. All policies now meet statutory requirements. You, other senior leaders and governors are regularly checking that the policies are being followed fully and, where any concerns are raised, ensuring that swift and appropriate action is taken. The new school website is easy to navigate, provides helpful information for parents and carers, and meets current statutory requirements.

You have implemented a revised approach to the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar skills. Pupils in Key Stage 2 who have gaps in their knowledge are being effectively supported. As a result, visits to lessons and work in pupils' books show that pupils are writing with greater confidence in a broad range of subjects. A new marking policy has been introduced and is being implemented consistently across the school. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the regular opportunities they have to review and respond to teachers' marking. They were proud to show me their workbooks with examples of detailed marking, as well as follow-up tasks to help them check their understanding and improve their work. Staff are developing a better understanding of what outstanding practice looks like through coaching and opportunities to visit other schools.

You have reviewed the roles of subject leaders and created curriculum leadership groups. This is helping subject leaders to develop their skills and confidence through good opportunities for collaborative working. Subject leaders are increasingly involved in checking pupils' progress through work scrutiny, moderation and leading staff meeting discussions. Consequently, they are accurately identifying gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge and planning appropriate actions for improvement.

The governing body is well led. Governors are receiving a range of training to update their knowledge and skills. They are visiting the school more frequently to see for themselves what is happening on the ground. As a result, governors are increasingly asking senior leaders challenging questions to rigorously and systematically check all aspects of the school's work.

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 local authority is providing good support. Local authority officers have undertaken a full review of safeguarding. You welcome the regular visits of the senior school improvement adviser to check on progress and to challenge you on the impact of your leadership.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector