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Debbie Middleton
Headteacher
Leigh Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Middleton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Leigh Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 December 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 April 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- raise standards, particularly in mathematics, by making sure that teaching is always pitched at the right level for pupils' learning needs
- raise expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons, especially in lower Key Stage 2
- make sure that provision in the Reception class helps all children to build further on the good learning habits and behaviours they are now developing in the much improved Nursery class
- improve pupils' handwriting.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, subject leaders for English and mathematics, and two governors to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I looked at several documents, which included: the school's own evaluation of its work, school improvement plans and information about pupils' progress. I also examined the single central record of staff recruitment checks.

Context

Since the school was inspected in April 2015, three teachers and two teaching assistants have left the school. An assistant headteacher has been appointed and, currently, two classes are being taught by teachers employed on a temporary basis. Two existing members of staff have taken on the leadership of English and mathematics in the school. Two new governors have joined the governing body.

Main findings

Your work to improve the quality of teaching is yielding results. Since the school was last inspected, the leadership team has been strengthened. The deputy headteacher and newly appointed assistant headteacher are injecting purposeful energy that is helping you drive forward with your plans for school improvement. The subject leaders for English and mathematics are also playing their part. All these key leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and learning, check information on pupils' performance and support others to improve their practice. Your overview of the school's current performance is realistic and accurate. School governors are well informed about how the school is doing and what needs to be done next.

You report that teamwork is stronger than it used to be and that staff are now more ambitious for their pupils. I agree that this is the case. However, while expectations are higher in all classes, some teachers communicate this more effectively than others. In some classrooms, for example, teachers make it clear to pupils how they can improve their work and learning. Pupils are prompted to make use of classroom resources such as dictionaries and thesauri when needed, to think hard and to ask questions. Consequently, they rise to the challenges set in lessons, take pride in their efforts and want to succeed.

In other classes, however, there are times when teachers do not make their expectations clear or ambitious enough. They too readily accept that pupils cannot manage certain tasks or do not explain what they want pupils to achieve in a lesson. Consequently, some pupils are still not making fast enough progress in their learning.

In all classes, the quality of pupils' handwriting is extremely variable.

The quality of phonics teaching has improved and standards in reading and writing are rising. In the 2015 Year 1 phonics check, 71% of pupils reached the expected

standard for their age, which is a significant improvement on previous years. At the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, standards in reading and writing also rose in 2015. It is clear that pupils' reading skills are improving and school staff have plans in place to build further on this. These plans focus on promoting reading for pleasure and reading at home. Pupil 'Reading Champions' have just been appointed; their job is to come up with ideas to inspire others to read and enjoy reading. Indeed, this pupil-led approach is indicative of school leaders' work to do more to gather and act on pupils' views and involve them in planning whole-school improvement.

Standards in mathematics are still some way below average. Boosting pupils' progress in mathematics, in both key stages, is a key priority for the school. Leaders and governors know this and are directing their efforts into providing training and support in order to get the best from all teachers and pupils.

A new system for tracking and assessing pupils' progress has been introduced. The school leadership team is keeping a close eye on the accuracy and reliability of this new system. Leaders and governors meet with teachers at half-termly pupil planning meetings to check how well pupils are doing and how the new assessment routines are working. Leaders know that there is still more work to do to get pupils to expected standards by the time they leave primary school, especially in mathematics. In Key Stage 2, in particular, there are still many pupils who need to make faster progress if they are to make up the lost ground due to weak teaching received in the past.

Pupils' behaviour around the school is generally good. In lessons, they present themselves as interested in learning.

In the Nursery, some significant improvements have been made. The learning environment is well organised and children are guided to develop skills and good learning habits that will help them in later years. The provision in the Reception class has not developed at the same rate. In this class, children respond well to adult-led tasks and do well. They do not, however, always get the guidance they need in order to tackle activities without close supervision. Consequently, they flit from one activity to another without any real sense of purpose.

In order to provide parents with more information about teaching and how they can support their children's learning at home, workshops have been held. The most recent session was about how the school teaches phonics. Similar events are planned for the future.

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

The school has received helpful advice and support from the local authority and the diocese. Leaders and staff have attended training and worked with advisory staff to improve aspects of their work. In addition, school leaders have taken it upon themselves to seek out advice from local and regional contacts. There is a strong network of local schools and through these links teachers have been able to share and develop their practice. This has helped to recognise and celebrate successes and also brought challenge where it has been needed. Consequently, teaching and leadership at the school have improved.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Coventry local authority and the Director of Education at Coventry Diocese. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye

Her Majesty's Inspector