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18 December 2015

Mr Robin Bone
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bone

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Eckington Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 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 in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with yourself, the deputy headteacher, the school's leader for assessment, monitoring and evaluation and the school improvement adviser from the local authority. I observed the reading club and toured the school. I also checked the school's single central record. I met with three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. I also spoke with six pupils in Years 3 and 4. I looked at a range of documentation including the post-Ofsted action plan and records of the quality of teaching. I scrutinised pupils' work in English, mathematics and writing.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, two teachers have left and the school has reorganised classes to include two mixed-age classes. The leadership restructure is now finalised and a new member of staff has been appointed from within the school, who has responsibility for assessment, monitoring and evaluation. One new parent governor has joined the governing body.

Main findings

You and your leaders and governors have taken swift action to address the areas for improvement identified at the inspection in May. The new leader for assessment, monitoring and evaluation has played a pivotal role in ensuring the rapidity of response. She has been particularly effective in driving improvements in teaching across the school. She has worked effectively with the headteacher to introduce the school's new system for assessment, using national curriculum statements, to enable leaders to measure pupils' progress from their starting points.

The school's post-Ofsted action plan is a comprehensive document that incorporates all the relevant priorities, and some relevant additional ones, which relate to practical mathematics and consistent modelling of calculation methods. Some success criteria in the plan are not sharp enough and as a result do not provide governors with precise information about what needs to be improved. There is evidence that monitoring and evaluation activities take place, but there is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for evaluation.

You have successfully introduced a book club to ensure a coherent approach to teaching reading skills. Teachers and teaching assistants are all involved and most make effective use of a book log that relates to the school's new assessment systems. Pupils are making improved progress in their reading as a result. You have rightly recognised that not all staff have sufficient phonics (letters and the sounds they make) knowledge and are putting in place appropriate staff training to address this.

The quality of teaching is improving but remains variable. You have recognised the necessity to scrutinise pupils' work to help you determine the further development needs of your teachers. Pupils' work in books showed that more teachers are now providing appropriate challenge, including for the most-able pupils. You have successfully introduced clear expectations for presentation and the quality of presentation in pupils' books is improving rapidly. Teachers' use of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning is variable. More training and support is required to ensure consistency.

Historic achievement information from 2015 shows that pupils did not make as much progress as they should in reading, writing and mathematics. However, disadvantaged pupils performed better than their peers in all subjects. Current

performance information provided by the school shows that pupils are beginning to make more progress, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Pupils' achievement in mathematics remains a concern for all year groups and boys still do not achieve the standards that they should. Your transition arrangements are increasingly effective and you have improved information about what pupils are capable of when they join the school.

Pupils' attendance was below the national average in 2015, particularly for boys and disadvantaged pupils. Your current information shows that since September of this year there have been rapid improvements in pupils' attendance. However, you do not routinely monitor the attendance of groups of pupils and report to the governing body accordingly. Your new behaviour system serves to reward pupils for good attitudes to learning. Pupils are proud to collect their bands as a result of positive behaviour in lessons.

Governors are highly effective and the Chair of the Governing Body is now well supported by some knowledgeable and perceptive governors. Governors provide copious amounts of appropriate challenge to the headteacher. They visit the school regularly and are committed to checking for themselves the accuracy of leaders' judgements about the school. As a result, they have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of 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

The school improvement adviser from the local authority is providing effective and well-considered support in a number of relevant areas, including checking the accuracy of teachers' assessments. This support has been front-loaded but has rightly reduced over time. School leaders appreciate the quality of the support that the local authority has provided.

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

Yours sincerely

Julia Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector