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14 October 2015

Miss Samantha Mitchell
Egerton Primary School
Cox Green Road
Egerton
Bolton
Lancashire
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Dear Miss Mitchell

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Egerton Primary School

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

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about outcomes for pupils at the school.

Evidence

During my visit, I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I evaluated the school improvement plan and the English development plan, as well as governing body reports and records of local authority visits. I also considered the most recent school assessment information and your records of checks on the quality of teaching.

I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, the English subject leader and three members of the governing body. I met with a group of pupils to discuss their learning and evaluated a range of pupils' books from across the school. I visited every classroom with you to observe learning and to speak to pupils. I also considered 22 responses to Parent View (the online Ofsted parent questionnaire).

Context

Egerton is an average-sized primary school with 215 pupils on roll. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils for whom English is not or believed not to be their first language is below the national average. The proportion of pupils

entitled to pupil premium funding (additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free schools meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is below the national average. The proportion of pupils included in the register of special educational needs is also below the national average. Fewer pupils leave or join the school at different times of the year than that seen in other schools nationally.

The current headteacher joined the school in 2013.

This monitoring inspection was carried out in response to a decline in standards in writing.

You know the school extremely well. Our learning walk and visits to classrooms held no surprises for you. You and senior leaders observe lessons, look at pupils' books and talk to children regularly to check on the quality of teaching. This attention to detail has enabled you to quickly identify and tackle the cause of the dip in achievement seen in writing in 2014. As a result, the proportion of pupils who made expected and above-expected progress in writing in 2015 improved to above the national average. Furthermore, over half of pupils reached levels above that expected for their age (Level 5) in writing when they left Year 6.

The high standards of achievement previously seen in the early years and at Key Stage 1 have been maintained. The vibrant and purposeful early years environment is a strength of the school and ensures that children's learning gets off to a flying start and continues at pace throughout the year. As a result, over two-thirds of children exceeded the standards expected of them in writing by the time they left Reception in 2015. Examples of high-quality writing seen during the inspection show that pupils are very well prepared to meet the demands of the curriculum as they move into Year 1.

At the forefront of your efforts to improve pupils' achievement in writing has been a new marking and feedback policy. Teachers focus their feedback to pupils on precisely what needs to be done to improve their work. As a typical comment from a pupil explains: 'Feedback helps me to reflect on my previous work and improve my writing the next time.' Pupils are given time every day to consider the feedback they have received from their teachers. As a consequence, pupils know exactly what they need to do to continually improve their writing.

You have your sights firmly set on continuing to build on the improvements seen in 2015. You place a high value on developing teachers' skills through investment in training. In-school professional development is focussed on the areas that matter to achieve improvements in pupil outcomes. Teachers share expertise and find solutions to issues within school through their regular teaching and learning community meetings. Furthermore, five teachers have either completed, or are currently enrolled on, an 'outstanding teacher' programme provided through a local teaching school. As a result, your records (confirmed by reports of local authority visits) show that teaching continues to go from strength to strength.

Evidence from the lessons we visited clearly shows that the strong subject knowledge of teachers and support staff is giving pupils the tools they need to become effective and confident writers. In Year 6 for example, the teacher used high-quality texts and skilful questioning to develop pupils' understanding and use of adverbial phrases. As a result, the quality of their writing, linked to the story of *Kensuke's Kingdom* by Michael Morpurgo, was significantly enhanced.

You and other senior leaders have carefully considered the schools' approach to assessment and the new curriculum. You have highlighted gaps in pupils' skills that are a result of higher expectations and are tackling these relentlessly. Teachers use what they know about pupils to plan activities that challenge, extend and build upon learning. In a Year 4 class for example, pupils used what they had learnt about similes in previous weeks to enrich their descriptive sentences. As a consequence, over time, pupils are developing a useful toolkit that enables them to produce high-quality writing.

Opportunities for pupils to enhance their writing skills beyond English lessons have also been developed to further improve writing. In Year 3 topic books for example, pupils applied their learning to produce high-quality information texts about plants. However, as we discussed, this is not a consistent picture across all classes in the school.

Behaviour across the school is exemplary and contributed strongly to the rapid progress in learning that pupils made in the classes I visited during my inspection. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and act as role models that pupils look up to. As a group of pupils told me during the inspection, 'teachers have earned our respect to get our respect'.

You have identified that spelling, for some pupils, is an issue that is holding back the quality of their writing. You are robustly addressing this issue through a range of well-considered actions. You have appointed a teacher with the specific role of leading the teaching of spelling throughout the school. You are analysing what pupils already know to identify gaps in spelling knowledge for every individual pupil in the school so that you can plug any gaps. Teachers' marking highlights spelling errors and pupils use 'fix-it time' to learn these words. Furthermore, the focus on spelling is highly visible across the school. For instance, classroom walls now display words linked to pupils' learning and in some classes pupils are supported with vocabulary lists. This work is at an early stage and consequently you are not yet able to judge the impact of your actions. Nonetheless, you are aware that a consistent approach, over time, is required to ensure that the gaps in pupils' spelling skills are thoroughly addressed.

Governors share your passion to do the very best for the pupils at the school and demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They hold you, and others, effectively to account by asking leaders to regularly present reports about their improvement plans. They also ask appropriate and challenging questions to ensure that your actions are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

External support

The local authority has had a light-touch involvement with the school. The local authority advisor visits the school termly to provide advice and support leaders' evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. A number of staff currently work with a teaching school on an 'outstanding teacher' programme.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to prioritise the improvement of spelling skills across the school.
- Ensure that opportunities to develop high-quality writing across subjects of the curriculum are provided consistently across all classes in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Bell

Her Majesty's Inspector