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13 April 2016

Mrs M Ray
Edith Moorhouse Primary School
Lawton Avenue
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Dear Mrs Ray

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Edith Moorhouse Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 March 2016, 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 June 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the effectiveness of the early years by ensuring that activities hold sufficient appeal
- improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that activities, particularly for the most-able pupils, are sufficiently challenging
- develop the effectiveness of subject leaders in evaluating the impact of their actions on improving standards
- sharpen the pupil premium plan so that leaders can evaluate the impact of their actions on narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the inclusion manager, the mathematics and writing subject leaders, two governors including the chair and two representatives of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I scrutinised other school documents, including records of leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning. The single central record was checked. I joined you on a tour of the school and visited 10 classes, taking the opportunity to look at pupils' work.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a teacher with responsibility for pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 left in February 2016. A teacher with responsibility for a different Year 3 and Year 4 class, who had been absent, has now resigned and left. Temporary teachers teach both these classes. Leaders have successfully recruited two new permanent teachers for September 2016. A part-time teacher with responsibility for pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 left in December 2015. A different teacher now teaches this class. In January 2016, the early years manager who was absent during the previous inspection, returned on a part-time basis. This arrangement is now full time.

The governing body has expressed an interest in the school becoming an academy and is currently considering a variety of options. No firm plans are in place.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, there has been a real step change to school improvement. You have taken stock, revitalised your approach and adopted a purposeful attitude to ensure that the school improves rapidly. You describe the previous inspection as pivotal, providing just the right tonic to kick-start the school's improvement journey. You exemplify unwavering resolve to provide pupils with a high-quality experience. Since the start of the school year, you have established appropriate and helpful systems, raising expectations with staff quickly and effectively.

The school's action plan is detailed and priorities are well matched to the areas requiring improvement. The actions identified are suitable and staggered appropriately over the school year. The plan is strengthened by the wide-ranging support provided by the local authority. Targets are ambitious and rightly focused on raising standards. A key feature of the plan is the more regular monitoring cycle that accompanies it. You have successfully enabled others to become involved in monitoring the school's progress towards achieving your aims. You and your team regularly evaluate the impact of your actions and this enables you to confidently

adapt and refine key actions as and when necessary. This responsive approach ensures there is a steady upward momentum of improvement.

You gather information on how well pupils are progressing more regularly. You have trialled different systems for gathering pupils' progress information. You have sensibly settled on an approach that best suits the school's needs. This has enabled leaders to identify promptly any groups who are falling behind. You have wisely spent time with governors, ensuring that they understand the school's new system to assess without levels. Consequently, governors are able to challenge more confidently. Teaching staff have reviewed the school's marking and feedback policy. There is greater emphasis on providing pupils with more helpful feedback. Teachers always acknowledge pupils' efforts. Staff, including teaching assistants, ensure that pupils obtain timely feedback that promotes and develops their understanding well. As a result, pupils are now more engaged in their own learning. They are developing a stronger sense of how their skills are improving over time as well as a determination to achieve their next learning steps.

The quality of teaching is improving. Teachers are receiving more timely feedback and responding well to the expectations you set. You are making greater use of a wide range of information, including that gathered from regular work scrutiny activities, from talking to pupils and the regular visits you make to classrooms. You have revitalised the way in which teachers plan. Because of helpful training, teachers plan activities more astutely for the varying ability range in their classes. Occasionally, activities for the most-able pupils are not challenging enough. There are regular opportunities for pupils, particularly those at risk of underachieving, to work in smaller, more focused groups. This is because support from teaching assistants is more purposeful. As a result, pupils engage more readily in question and answer sessions, helping to develop their understanding more quickly.

Attainment is rising. Pupils are now making more rapid progress, particularly in writing and mathematics. Current school information shows that more pupils are achieving age-related expectations than in the past. You have wisely adapted class timetables, ensuring that every pupil has a daily English and mathematics session. As a result, pupils are writing more regularly and across a range of subjects. Teachers plan activities to develop pupils' mastery of a variety of literary devices effectively. For example, pupils in a Year 5 and 6 class were able to use simile, metaphor and personification appropriately to bring descriptive texts to life. Pupils' handwriting and presentation has also greatly improved. Many write fluently, with a cursive script, and are keen to produce work to a higher standard. In mathematics, pupils are beginning to apply their skills to investigate and solve problems. During my visit, pupils in a Year 1 and Year 2 class studying fractions were able to explore different ways of finding half of a rectangle.

The leaders for mathematics and writing are contributing well to the development of their subjects. For example, there is now a greater emphasis on using texts such as the story 'Pebble in my pocket' to inspire Year 3 and Year 4 pupils' writing efforts about the Stone Age. The staff have a positive attitude to changes and are very determined to work together to ensure that the school is judged good or better at the next inspection. Subject leaders have received some useful training and this has successfully boosted the leadership capacity of the school. They have written helpful action plans and are more involved in monitoring activities. However, work to evaluate the impact of their actions on raising standards is at an early stage.

Progress to develop the effectiveness of the early years has been slower. You have appropriately reorganised the learning environment. For example, the water and sand play area has been moved to avoid causing a slippery surface in a busy thoroughfare. There is now a greater choice of activities for children, covering all key aspects of learning. Teaching assistants support children well, asking pertinent questions and structuring their learning appropriately. However, some activities still do not hold children's interest sufficiently well. When this is the case, children tend to flit from one activity to another. In these instances, children's attention wanes and their progress slows.

A review of governance and the use of pupil premium funding has been completed. Governors recognise the need for the school to improve urgently. As a result, they have realigned committees and emphasised appropriately the need to keep sharp oversight on standards. Governors have received useful training and use this to good effect to offer challenge to the headteacher. Governors now meet more regularly and are determined to play their part in improving the school quickly. Work to monitor the use of pupil premium funding and the difference it makes has been overhauled. There is now a much clearer plan. However, measures to ascertain if disadvantaged pupils are catching up with their peers' achievement quickly could be sharpened. This will enable governors to fully evaluate the difference leaders are making to raising standards.

External support

The local authority has responded promptly to the previous inspection. A broad menu of training opportunities, closely matched to the areas requiring improvement, is ensuring that the quality of teaching is improving. An officer has joined senior leaders in visiting lessons. This has proved helpful in ensuring that the school's judgements are accurate and helpful to teachers. Teaching assistants, particularly those in the early years, have benefited from visits to several other schools. Helpful support is also making a difference to the effectiveness of subject leaders, although this is at an early stage. The school's task group, led by a local authority officer, meets regularly and holds you and the chair of the governing body to account well. This is contributing well to ensuring the pace of improvement is maintained.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector