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31 March 2016

Lorraine Adams
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Dear Lorraine Adams

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oxley Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 second 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. 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- strengthen teaching so that pupils in all classes make good progress and reach higher standards
- make sure that governors hold teachers with responsibilities to account for their impact on pupils' achievement.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor to discuss

the actions taken since the last monitoring inspection in October 2015. I also met with a local authority representative and the headteachers of Elston Hall Primary School and St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the latest information about pupils' achievement, written feedback to teachers following observations of lessons and reviews of pupils' work. During this inspection, you and the deputy headteacher joined me on visits to most classes. We talked to pupils about their learning and we looked at examples of pupils' mathematics and writing work.

Context

At the time of this inspection two teachers and one teaching assistant were absent due to ill health. At the end of last term you liaised with the local authority to arrange new support for senior leaders and staff at Oxley. You, the deputy headteacher, staff and teaching assistants have been receiving support from senior leaders and staff at Elston Hall Primary School and St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School teaching alliance.

Main findings

You and the deputy headteacher have responded well to the significant weaknesses identified at the time of my last monitoring inspection in October 2015 and the subsequent pre-formal warning notice issued by the local authority. With effective support from the teaching alliance, you and the deputy headteacher have accurately identified what the school is doing well and also what needs to improve. As senior leaders, you are both tackling the weaknesses in the school with renewed vigour. You are both resolute in your determination to ensure that the school is 'good' as quickly as possible.

The revised school improvement plan identifies the precise actions that will be taken to help accelerate pupils' progress and to strengthen teaching, leadership and governance. The plan contains measurable criteria so that governors can easily check the impact of the actions within the plan on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.

You and the deputy headteacher have strengthened significantly the systems for checking the work of staff. The feedback you provide to teachers after visits to lessons and reviews of pupils' work is helpful and leading to improvements in teaching. There is a strong focus on the achievement of different groups of pupils and the actions that individual teachers need to take to help all pupils make faster progress. You are not afraid to challenge and take suitable action in response to poor performance.

In all the classes we visited, pupils were keen to talk to us about their learning and to show us their work. Their work was well presented, with many pupils joining their

letters correctly and neatly. Most teachers are using the information they have about pupils' achievement to plan suitably challenging activities for pupils of different abilities. Teachers and teaching assistants ask insightful questions to successfully extend pupils' thinking and to encourage pupils to find out for themselves.

Actions taken to raise pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement in the majority of year groups, including the early years. Teachers make sure that pupils have frequent opportunities to use their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) to spell correctly, and to use punctuation and grammar accurately. Teachers are also making sure that the writing activities they plan interest boys and girls. In the Reception class, for instance, the children found a golden egg in the school playground and were writing down what they thought was inside. This writing activity successfully engaged all children and it encouraged them to include descriptive words in their sentences. In mathematics, teachers are increasingly providing activities which develop pupils' reasoning and mathematical skills. In one example, a group of the most-able Year 4 pupils were thoroughly enjoying solving a mathematical problem. They commented that their work in mathematics was much more 'exciting' because it made them think.

Senior leaders acknowledge that, although teaching is improving, some inconsistencies remain, particularly in Years 1 and 3. The actions you have identified to further strengthen teaching in these year groups are appropriate.

Your latest information about pupils' achievement shows that standards remain below those expected in reading, writing and mathematics due to previous weaknesses in teaching. However, as a result of the actions that senior leaders and staff are taking, standards are rising and the gaps between different groups of pupils are closing much more quickly than in the past. Pupils are making the progress they should, with increasing proportions making good progress in the early years and Years 4 and 5, and more recently in Years 2 and 6. The deputy headteacher is keeping a close check on pupils who have special educational needs or disability to make sure that they receive the support they need. This is helping them to make the same progress as their classmates.

Governors are supportive. However, not all are able to attend meetings regularly. Following an external review of governance, the members of the governing body set up a 'Getting to Good' committee so that they could focus more on pupils' achievement and teaching during discussions with senior leaders. Unfortunately, this committee has only been able to meet once because of the unavailability of some governors. Senior leaders ensure that governors are well informed about pupils' achievement and teaching. This enables governors to question senior leaders about the progress of different groups of pupils. Nevertheless, and as reported previously, governors are still not holding all teachers with responsibilities to account.

The external review of the pupil premium has helped senior leaders and governors to review how this additional money is spent and to make sure that disadvantaged pupils receive the support they need. Your latest achievement information shows that the additional support for these pupils is helping them to make faster progress.

External support

Following the previous monitoring inspection in October 2015, the local authority responded promptly to the weaknesses I identified. The two local authority reviews of the school have provided leaders and governors with an effective level of challenge and support. The reviews have also correctly identified where further improvements are required. The support from the teaching school alliance and from the local authority adviser has contributed to the improvements in teaching and in pupils' learning and has helped to strengthen leadership. The local authority recognises that further work is required to improve the work of the governing body. Governors are intending to organise some training for themselves.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector