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Martin Shufflebottom
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Shufflebottom

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Paganel Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 April 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 make sure that:

- all leaders routinely check the effectiveness of their actions in speeding up pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics
- pupils have sufficient opportunities to reason mathematically, to solve increasingly difficult mathematical problems and to consolidate and deepen their knowledge and understanding
- pupils present their work in all subjects to the best of their ability, especially in Years 1, 2 and 4

- pupils' progress in reading is accelerated in Years 1 and 4
- pupils' attendance is at least in line with the national average
- pupils who are disadvantaged close the gap rapidly on other pupils nationally
- an appropriate support and mentoring package is put in place for the new headteacher who starts in September 2016.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, senior leaders, subject leaders and governors, including the chair of the governing body, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. You showed me around the school and we visited classrooms in all year groups. I also met with representatives of the St Mary's Teaching School Alliance and spoke on the telephone with a representative of the Birmingham Education Partnership. I scrutinised a number of documents including the school's self-evaluation form and subsequent action plan, information about current pupils' progress and attendance and the notes of visit from the school's school improvement partner. I examined pupils' books from a range of subjects.

Context

Since the previous inspection, four teachers have left the school and been replaced. Other staff joining the school include a strategic business manager and an assistant headteacher who is also the new special educational needs coordinator. You have appointed a new early years leader. The school has grown considerably and there is now an additional class in Reception year and Year 1. Two classes are taught by temporary teachers. Two teachers are on maternity leave. The building work taking place during the last inspection has been completed. You have announced your retirement for personal reasons. Your successor has been appointed and will take up her post in September 2016.

Main findings

You and other staff agree that, for a variety of reasons, leaders took their 'eye off the ball' in the lead up to the previous inspection. This resulted in declining standards in a school previously judged as 'good'. However, you, your staff and governors now have a clear focus, strong belief and ambition that Paganel will be judged a good school at the next inspection. You have announced your retirement for personal reasons. However, you remain focused on improving pupils' standards. You are clearly motivated and determined to see the school improve. Your successor has been appointed and will take up her post in September 2016. It is important that she and the governors maintain the momentum and the progress made since the last inspection.

Since the previous inspection, you and other leaders have acted quickly to address

the areas for improvement identified by the inspectors. You are also taking effective action to resolve the weaknesses you found from your thorough and detailed evaluation of the school's work. You are providing strong leadership to support the school through a period of significant growth and change. You are working effectively to make sure staff, pupils and parents understand the plans for the future. As a result, staff are supportive of your actions and recognise that the necessary changes are having a positive effect on pupils' progress.

After the previous inspection, you quickly sought external support. You are working effectively with the St Mary's Teaching School Alliance, The University of Wolverhampton Education Central and the Birmingham Education Partnership. Staff who spoke with me said that they greatly value the well-focused and relevant training and support these partners provide. The mathematics subject leader and teachers are particularly appreciative of the guidance to improve their teaching of mathematics. Teachers told me that they had not fully appreciated how their practice needed to change in order to deliver the new mathematics national curriculum. Information provided by the school shows that the teaching of mathematics is improving and that the majority of pupils are doing well in mathematics across the school. However, staff recognise that pupils need increased opportunities to reason mathematically and to solve increasingly difficult mathematical problems in order to consolidate and deepen their knowledge and understanding.

You have reviewed how teachers and leaders check and track pupils' progress. As a result, you have refined how teachers assess pupils' work and introduced a commercial product to track how pupils are doing. The work in pupils' books shows that teachers are using the information they have about what pupils know and can do to set work that matches their ability. In addition, teachers are providing effective feedback to pupils that helps them to improve their work. As a result, the most-able pupils are challenged appropriately and are doing well in the majority of classes. You review pupils' progress every half term and the majority of leaders are using this information to implement suitable intervention and support for pupils who are not doing well. Information provided by the school shows that pupils who are disadvantaged are closing the gap on or, in some classes, doing better than other pupils in the school. You recognise that this group of pupils needs to close the gap rapidly on other pupils nationally.

You and governors have challenged underperformance through the appropriate use of appraisal and performance management. As a result, some staff have left the school. Information provided by leaders shows that other staff have risen to the challenge and improved their performance. The consequence of this is that pupils' progress across classes is now more consistent. You and governors recognise that a minority of leaders have not led their area of responsibility effectively. You and your support partners have provided support and guidance for these staff. However, leaders, particularly of mathematics, have not ensured that all pupils are making the rapid progress needed to catch up as a result of previous weak teaching.

To help develop pupils' writing skills, the school has introduced 'no nonsense spelling'. This helps pupils to use and correctly spell words and phrases appropriate for their age. In addition, leaders have introduced new handwriting, presentation and marking policies. Pupils' books show that there are opportunities for them to write at length and that their spelling, punctuation and grammar and handwriting are improving. However, a small minority of pupils, particularly in Years 1, 2 and 4 are not presenting their work to the best of their ability.

The leaders with responsibility for literacy have consolidated and improved the strategies to improve pupils' reading. As a result, information provided by the school shows that pupils are doing well. They read more fluently and accurately, particularly in Year 6. However, leaders recognise that pupils' reading in Years 1 and 4 needs to improve further.

Pupils' behaviour remains a strength of the school. The atmosphere in classes and at lunchtime is calm and purposeful. Pupils are polite, courteous and keen to talk about their learning and what they have been doing in class. Teachers and leaders deal quickly and effectively with the occasional instances of misbehaviour. Leaders provide timely and appropriate support for pupils who have more challenging behaviour. Pupils' attendance, however, is not improving quickly enough and at the time of this visit was below the national average for primary schools.

Ofsted may provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

You have made very effective use of the support provided by St Mary's Teaching School Alliance, The University of Wolverhampton Education Central and the Birmingham Education Partnership. Information provided by the school and the work in pupils' books shows that this support and guidance has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and in pupils' outcomes. Almost all of the staff commented positively about the impact of the support on their practice. In their discussions with me, the majority of leaders demonstrated a secure understanding of how to check and evaluate the impact of their work. You recognise that this support should continue to make sure all leaders are effective and can secure the best possible results for the pupils. You are also part of the Senneleys Consortium which provides a range of effective support.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector