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Mr Harmander Singh Dhanjal
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Dear Mr Dhanjal

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Nishkam Primary School, Wolverhampton

Following my visit to your school on 14 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 recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that there is a special educational needs coordinator in post who is suitably qualified for the role within three years of their appointment
- identify specific reasons why pupils have fallen behind to ensure that effective measures are taken so that they rapidly catch up.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, pupils, the chair of the directors' trust, and members of the governing body including the outgoing chair, who is also chief executive of the trust, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A telephone call was held with an external improvement partner. The school improvement plan was evaluated along with assessment information for current pupils and records of monitoring teaching. A scrutiny of Year 1 pupils' books in literacy and numeracy was carried out.

Context

Since the last inspection the school has doubled the number of pupils on roll from 57 to 116 pupils and is set to expand further up to 420 pupils in the next four years. There is now a Year 2 class and a second class in Reception. The school appointed two additional teachers in September 2015. An assistant headteacher has been appointed who started in the same week as the monitoring visit. Previous attempts to make an appointment for this post were unsuccessful. As a result, a deputy headteacher from one of the partner schools in the trust has been working with the school one day a week since September 2015 to enhance its leadership capacity and to support teaching in Year 1.

Main findings

You have responded with determination and speed to the issue raised in the previous inspection report relating to the quality of teaching. In particular, you have successfully achieved improvements to teaching in Year 1 through rigorous monitoring and support for planning, teaching and additional training. A personal teacher development plan sets out specific measurable targets which have been reviewed every six weeks. There have been opportunities for staff to visit successful schools within the trust and further afield. Monitoring of lessons, learning walks and scrutinies of pupils' work, including marking, have been thorough in identifying strengths and areas for improvement in teaching. Consequently, you are now in a position to reduce the level of support in Year 1.

The impact of the improvements was seen in the school's current achievement information, which indicates that all pupils in Year 1 are on track to make at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In mathematics, pupils are given the opportunity to solve problems linked to telling the time, conduct practical activities such as predicting whether 3D shapes will roll, slide or stack and explain their answers through reasoning. In their writing, pupils can identify the features of a fantasy story and write for a range of purposes and audiences, including factual reports as science experiments or newspaper articles.

Pupil progress meetings between senior leaders and teachers identify which pupils

are at risk of falling behind but do not identify clearly enough the specific reasons why. For example, too often, pupils are identified as either having special educational needs, speaking English as an additional language or being low attaining as reasons why pupils are not making enough progress. Specific reasons, such as those that relate to the effectiveness of teaching or support programmes, are not clearly identified.

The school's marking policy introduced in September 2015 has led to a higher level of consistency and effectiveness of feedback to pupils. Work seen in pupils' books supports the school's view of the progress pupils are now making. Written feedback, while not yet consistent in its effectiveness, is rapidly improving. There are still some instances where pupils' areas for development that have been identified by teachers are not followed up in subsequent lessons.

Pupils responded enthusiastically when talking about their lessons and their teachers. They were especially positive about their learning in mathematics, reading and physical education. Pupils reported that there was a small minority of pupils who behave poorly in the playground. No evidence of this was seen during the visit where the environment was calm and purposeful.

The school has taken longer to address the issue of developing middle leadership. Until very recently, the school was unable to make a successful appointment of an assistant headteacher, one of whose intended areas of responsibility was to lead on most-able pupils. While the vacancy remained, the school has benefited from the effective support from a senior leader of a partner school. This arrangement will continue during the summer term to enable a smooth transition to the assistant headteacher.

The small size of the school has led to the responsibility for many roles falling to the headteacher. These include that of leadership for pupils who have special educational needs or disability in the absence of a qualified special educational needs coordinator. It also means that, at times, the action plan does not identify different people to conduct the tasks, monitor and evaluate the impact of actions.

Evidence from assessment information provided by the school indicates that the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress across all year groups is high. Additional adults work with all groups of pupils including those identified as the most able.

You have tackled the previous inspection issue of inaccurate assessment information as pupils move from one key stage or class to another. More time is now given in the early years for children to settle before an assessment of their skills, knowledge and understanding when they start school is collected. This information is checked internally and externally to ensure its accuracy. The proportion of children currently in Reception set to reach a good level of development is higher than the average proportion that did so in 2015. There were

still a few errors in the assessment information provided during the inspection for pupils in Years 1 and 2 where some figures were found to be incorrect. These errors were rectified during the visit.

Leaders and governors now have a more realistic view of the school as reflected in the school's action plan which focuses on weaknesses identified from the previous inspection. The governing body and trust contains much experience and expertise in the field of education.

External support

The school has continued to receive external support and challenge from highly experienced educational professionals who provide a termly evaluation of the progress the school is making. They have successfully challenged senior leaders to increase the effectiveness of their monitoring programme. The support of a senior leader from a partner school has led to rapid improvements in teaching in Year 1. The education sub-committee of the trust enables headteachers from other schools in the trust to provide challenge to their peers on the achievement information provided.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector