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Andrew Livingstone
Interim executive headteacher
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Dear Mr Livingstone

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Murrayfield Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 May 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in September 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim executive headteacher, chair of the interim executive board, and representatives of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. Various documents were seen, including information about pupils' attendance and progress. Meetings were held with the lead teacher for special educational needs and disability (SENCo), the associate deputy headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher. Documentation for the safe recruitment of new staff was examined. The interim executive headteacher joined the inspector for brief visits to every class. Pupils were observed at play during morning break. The inspector talked to a few parents informally in the playground.

Context

There has been high staff turnover and changes in leaders' roles since the previous section 5 inspection. The interim executive headteacher has been appointed as the permanent headteacher from 1 July 2016. A deputy headteacher resigned and the assistant headteacher is covering the position temporarily. In addition, the local authority is funding an associate deputy headteacher until the end of this term. The SENCo resigned and an existing teacher has been promoted internally to take on this role. Eight teachers left the school at Easter and have been replaced. Two of these teachers were the leaders of English and upper key stage 2; these roles are being covered by others temporarily. The business manager left in March and the finance officer has been appointed as bursar. Two teaching assistants and the learning mentor have left the school.

In November 2015, all but one of the governors resigned. The local authority commissioned an interim executive board of four experienced members to govern the school from January 2016. The school has received a letter from the regional schools commissioner notifying it of the Department for Education's intention for the school to convert to academy status, although a sponsor is not yet named. The interim executive board has written to parents to inform them.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

School leaders and governors are making adequate progress in addressing the areas for improvement outlined in the previous section 5 inspection and they are tackling these in the right order. The local authority checks regularly that the school's improvement plans are suitable and that they are implemented. A culture is unfolding of much higher expectations for the performance of staff and pupils. Even so, leaders' checking of teaching and learning has been patchy, lacking sufficient rigour and consistency. Leaders are too generous in their estimations of the quality of teaching and learning because assessment of the school's work is insufficiently evaluative.

Governors and leaders share the view that pupils' behaviour, punctuality and attendance must improve if they are to make better progress and achieve well. Parents have received clear guidance on the school's expectations for their children to arrive on time and attend regularly. This has led to a marked improvement. Lateness has reduced significantly. The overall attendance figure is rising rapidly and is currently close to the national average. The family liaison officer takes responsibility for working with families to improve the attendance of those vulnerable pupils whose attendance is still too low. Now that most pupils are in school regularly, they are better placed to make progress in their learning. Most girls and boys are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Behaviour in class and in the playground is improving rapidly because adults are implementing the new policy for behaviour consistently. Pupils know what the

expectations are for good behaviour and they are mindful of them. Parents commented that this has been instrumental in improving the school. Their children are proud to receive a praise-5 award or a good attendance certificate. During the inspection, no low-level disruption was seen; this was once typical and prevented others from learning. At morning break pupils were seen to play happily with one another. The number of pupils issued with a fixed-term exclusion since January has reduced significantly.

Leaders are intolerant of inadequate, ineffective teaching. In equal measures, staff are supported and held to account for the progress that pupils are making. Teaching is gradually improving but remains variable and, in some cases, fragile. Even so, a secure baseline has been secured of what every pupil knows and can do, against which their future progress can be measured with better accuracy. Teachers are using the information to plan work for pupils that is set at the right level of difficulty. The interim executive board is checking the school's assessment information diligently to form an accurate view of pupils' attainment and progress. The interim executive headteacher has ensured that a system for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress has been developed. He is conscious that it is cumbersome and too time-consuming to sustain, and is consequently considering better options.

The leadership team is currently under strength because so many posts are being filled temporarily. The local authority has provided suitable support for leaders of English and mathematics and those responsible for different year groups. The interim executive board has been pivotal in stabilising staffing and making sure that the school is fully staffed with permanency from September 2016. Governors are perceptive in their budget planning. Most of the funding is now spent wisely to raise achievement. In particular, the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority, is now ring-fenced so that it targets the pupils it is intended for. Teaching assistants have been redeployed to work specifically with those pupils and others whose needs justify additional help and teaching in small groups. The recommended external review of the pupil premium has not yet been actioned. In addition, the spending of the sport premium funding to increase pupils' participation in sports and physical activity has not been finalised and uploaded on to the school's website.

The local authority has provided effective training for the new SENCo that has made a difference in accelerating the progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability. The SENCo has completely revised systems and procedures for identifying pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Their progress is monitored closely and recorded carefully. Teachers know that they are responsible and accountable for the progress that this group of pupils make. Not enough time has been made available for the SENCo to observe and assure the quality of teaching for pupils who have special educational needs or disability.

The early years classes have endured a high turnover of staff in recent months. While arrangements to employ new staff have been successful, the quality of provision has diminished since the previous inspection. In Nursery and Reception, the quality of resources and planned activities to engage, excite and motivate young children are poor. Children are occupied but they are not learning as much as they should. Planning is not identifying the potential for learning for children at different stages in their development and to challenge children who are ready to learn new things.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector