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Mr Michael Lovett
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Lovett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tweeddale Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 May 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 July 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not 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:

- Sharpen the analysis and evaluation of the achievement made by different groups of pupils in the school compared with all pupils nationally, including in the early years.
- Use this information to set challenging and measurable targets for disadvantaged pupils in order to raise their overall achievement, so that gaps between them and non-disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups are closed quickly.
- Check the progress made towards these targets on a half-termly basis so that all leaders, including governors, are able to assess the impact of improvement strategies, adjust the targets as necessary and maximise the impact of the pupil premium.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders and the chair of the governing body. I also held a discussion with a local authority representative to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's planning for improvement, information about pupils' achievement, documentation relating to safeguarding, an external review of the impact of governance, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have appointed a new mathematics leader and three new teachers. Additionally, you explained that several teachers have recently moved to different year groups and key stages. The governing body is consulting with all key stakeholders on joining a multi-academy trust and plans to formalise this in September 2016.

Main findings

You and other leaders have responded to the previous inspection findings to secure improvement, as outlined in your action planning. However, analysis of pupils' outcomes lacks sharpness and therefore does not provide you and other leaders with an accurate picture of the school's performance. This is particularly so for the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, who constitute a third of the school population. External achievement information confirmed that in 2015, disadvantaged pupils performed significantly less well than both their peers and all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, at the end of both key stages. Leaders gather a wide range of information on pupils' progress and attainment. However, there is no direct comparison between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and that of non-disadvantaged pupils. This means that leaders are not able to judge accurately how well disadvantaged pupils are performing, whether significant gaps are closing, or whether the pupil premium funding is having sufficient impact on the outcomes for this group of pupils. You do not set specific targets to narrow the widening gaps between these two groups, or identify regular milestones in order to check whether the impact of your work is good enough. The school's current performance information confirms that achievement in mathematics, as well as in reading and writing, remains a key concern in certain year groups, and especially so for disadvantaged pupils.

You have secured solid foundations for success and school improvement because you and leaders at all levels have created a culture where staff are keen to work together and to achieve further improvements. You have rightly focused on

improving the quality of teaching. The teaching profile is stronger, as middle leaders are taking on more responsibilities to strengthen colleagues' practice through regular monitoring. They provide clear feedback on how teachers can improve their planning, teaching and assessment, including feedback to pupils on their next steps in learning. Nonetheless, middle leaders do not yet have the capacity to secure rapid improvement as they are overly dependent on external support from local authority advisers.

Too many inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching, primarily because some teachers are relatively new to the year group in which they are teaching. Work in pupils' books reflects some strong teaching, as teachers have a precise understanding of what they expect pupils to learn. They assess the extent of pupils' learning and make sure that their learning builds on what they already know and can do. Some teachers provide effective feedback to pupils on what they need to work on next. This moves learning on at a good pace. Nonetheless, the quality of feedback for pupils to improve their work varies significantly, particularly in mathematics. Equally, pupils are not given time to practise and deepen their skills and understanding. Too many teachers do not assess the extent of pupils' learning well enough. Work in pupils' books confirms that pupils are not challenged to think hard about their work. This does not deepen their learning, particularly in mathematics.

Governors are keen to secure much-needed improvement. Their role is becoming more strategic, as reflected in the school becoming part of a multi-academy trust with an outstanding local secondary school and four primary schools. Governors are determined to provide even further challenge and have recently commissioned another external review of governance, as a result of some dissatisfaction with the previous one undertaken in December 2015. Nevertheless, they are not able to hold senior leaders fully to account for their work. They do not know the extent of underachievement of disadvantaged pupils, as there is no direct analysis of this group's performance compared with non-disadvantaged pupils. There are no regular checks on the impact of the pupil premium funding to make sure that this group of learners achieve what they are capable of.

External support

The local authority has provided good support since the inspection. Teachers are given effective professional development to improve their practice. Local authority officers have recognised the need to boost the capacity of middle leaders to secure more rapid progress, and are currently working alongside them to sharpen their monitoring roles. The local authority has also provided guidance to governors regarding a further review of governance.

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

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds
Her Majesty's Inspector