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Dear Janice Porter

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ryton Community Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 October 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:

- refine improvement plans so that the recommendations of the previous inspection report can be tackled in a more systematic, measurable and rapid manner
- ensure that governors receive regular, accurate information about the performance of all groups of pupils, including the most able pupils and those with special educational needs or disability, to enable effective challenge and support

- urgently sharpen the processes and procedures for monitoring teaching, learning and assessment to secure improved outcomes for pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I visited all classes with you to observe lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. I also examined school tracking and assessment information and other documentation such as the outcomes of monitoring activities and the impact of performance management. I took the views of parents from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, into consideration.

Context

Since the previous inspection, governors have resumed consultation regarding a formal federation with Ryton Community Junior School. An executive headteacher for the federation has been appointed and is due to take up post in September 2016.

Main findings

Improvement planning lacks precision and measurability. There is insufficient detail to bring about rapid improvement in leadership and management or teaching and learning. The evaluation of work is too vague. Information about how, and to what extent, improvement is being made is inexact. Focus on the difference that actions are expected to make to pupils' progress and outcomes is not specific enough. Planning, therefore, is not supporting rapid progress against recommendations made in the previous inspection report.

Senior leaders have devised an assessment system to monitor the attainment of pupils in English and mathematics. Subject leaders are confident that this is beginning to impact favourably on planning and practice. However, precise targets which define and capture the progress of all groups of pupils from their different starting points are not yet well developed. The specific progress of pupils with special educational needs or disability, the most able pupils and children in the early years, for example, is unclear. Reports to governors, therefore, contain too little helpful information about pupils' achievements. Consequently, governors do not have enough facts to hold teachers and leaders robustly to account for pupils' progress and outcomes.

The monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently systematic to support improvement. Middle leaders have had training and support to conduct monitoring duties but they have not yet been afforded consistent opportunities to apply this in

practice. Irregular and informal discussions about the impact of teaching on learning take place, but systems for constructive professional dialogue about staff performance and pupils' outcomes are not embedded. While performance management targets have been reviewed and amended recently, these are not yet adequately linked to well-defined outcomes for pupils.

Support and guidance have been provided for all teaching staff to improve their subject knowledge of early reading skills, in particular the teaching of phonics. Training has also been delivered in the effective use of questioning to probe pupils' understanding and promote depth of thinking. Furthermore, all classrooms now have mathematical 'challenge areas', which are a clear favourite with pupils. This indicates that appropriate, direct attention is being given to address some of the priority issues identified in the previous inspection. Within these areas, therefore, positive effects on the quality of work seen in lessons and the interactions between adults and pupils are emerging.

External support

The school is drawing support from the local authority. A range of professional development opportunities for leaders and staff directly related to the recommendations of the previous inspection have been offered by the local authority. This is beginning to impact on practices within school. For example, early years, mathematics and English advisers from the local authority have worked with members of the school to develop and improve skills and leadership in these areas.

Overall impact of the external support offered has been limited, however, because leaders have not yet developed rigorous or consistent systems and processes in improvement planning, assessment or monitoring of teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel

Her Majesty's Inspector