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Mrs Tricia Gavins
Executive Principal
East Garforth Primary Academy
Aberford Road
East Garforth
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Dear Mrs Gavins

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to East Garforth Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 4 July 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, governors and the trust 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:

- ensure that the rate of improvement continues when new staff join the school in the new academic year
- further develop provision to ensure a more rapid start to school in the early years.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the outgoing executive principal to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with the head of academy, vice-principal and two middle leaders. I also met with two members of the education advisory board and the regional director of the academy trust. I visited all classrooms, talked with pupils and looked at pupils' work in books.

Context

There have been substantial changes to staffing since the school was inspected and there are more to come. The executive principal is leaving the trust and has been replaced by a new executive principal. The head of academy is also leaving the trust for a headship in another school and has been replaced by a new head of academy. A new vice-principal was appointed to add additional capacity to the leadership team. Of the 10 class teachers present at the inspection, only three will be in post in September. The roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants have been revised to better meet the needs of pupils.

Despite considerable turbulence in staffing, leaders are optimistic about the capacity of the school to continue to improve, and during discussions middle leaders spoke enthusiastically about the 'clear vision' provided by senior leaders. Senior leaders are aware of the need to embed the changes made and to ensure stability in staffing next year.

Main findings

Leaders have put plans into place to help teachers improve their practice. Teachers have been supported through additional training and coaching. This has enabled some teachers who were previously struggling to develop. As a consequence, there is much improvement across the school in the quality and consistency of teaching. In turn, this has enabled pupils to make better progress than in the past.

Middle leaders, well supported by the trust, have been proactive in developing their leadership skills. They have been in receipt of effective training and mentoring and are now playing a full role in monitoring the quality, and developing the consistency, of teaching in the school and in other schools in the trust. Middle leaders have provided training to help develop the subject knowledge of teaching assistants, thus improving the support teaching assistants are providing for pupils.

A slightly higher proportion of children have achieved a good level of development this year. Children in early years enter the setting with skills and abilities in line with, or above, those typical for their age. Leaders are aware that the progress children are making in Nursery and Reception should be more rapid. The proportion of pupils achieving the Year 1 phonics (the sounds that letters represent) check has improved to over 80%. In key stage 1, there are improvements in the proportions

of pupils achieving expected levels in reading and mathematics. Still, levels in writing remain low, with just below half of Year 2 pupils achieving the level expected for their age. In key stage 2, more pupils are expected to attain expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics, with the most able making more than expected progress. However, the proportions of pupils expected to achieve age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics combined are likely to be close to the government's minimum standard of 65%. Despite this, school assessment information indicates that pupils are now making good progress.

Leaders have raised the bar in their expectations of how pupils will behave in lessons, ensuring that time is well spent on learning. Teachers are now planning appropriately challenging activities and are insistent that pupils produce their best work. As a result of much greater consistency in teaching and in expectations, pupils are making better progress than in the past. Evidence in pupils' books shows that gaps between boys and girls are closing. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points.

Considerable discussion between staff has enabled agreements to be made on how meaningful feedback will be given to pupils to help them move forward in their learning. There is now greater consistency in the quality of marking and pupils value and respond to feedback from their teachers.

Leaders and teachers have worked to ensure that pupils learn writing skills through a range of exciting themes, for example 'crime and punishment' in Year 6. Events have been planned to stimulate pupils' imagination, such as the landing of 'aliens' on the school playground. Teachers are providing pupils with resources to support their writing and helping them to check their own progress against child-friendly success criteria. As a result of this work, boys are more engaged in writing and higher ability pupils are writing pieces of improved quality. Raised expectations of presentation and handwriting are ensuring that pupils present their work well.

Acting on feedback from pupils, and supported by the trust, investment has been made in laptops and tablets to ensure that pupils can access information technology more frequently. The technology has helped pupils to draft poems, write book reviews, research topics and practise phonics and mathematical skills. Pupils say that this makes learning more fun.

External support

The support provided by the trust has been pivotal to the improvements that have happened, particularly recently. The trust employs the executive principal to oversee actions and ensure that change brings about improvements for pupils. It has ensured a smooth handover from the outgoing executive principal to the new one. The trust has been responsible for recruiting the new head of academy. An ongoing programme of training and development is provided to middle leaders; leaders speak highly of training and development provided through the trust.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher
Her Majesty's Inspector