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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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8 July 2016

Mrs Catherine Stretton
Headteacher
Spinney Hill Primary School and Community Centre
Ventnor Street
Leicester
Leicestershire
LE5 5EZ

Dear Mrs Stretton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Spinney Hill Primary School and Community Centre

Following my visit to your school on 22 June 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 September 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection that took place in September 2013, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with: you; the deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, the phase leaders for key stage 1, lower key stage 2, upper key stage 2, and the members of staff with responsibility for the coordination of mathematics; and the chair of the governing body, the vice-chair of the governing body, two staff governors and one parent governor. I also met with a group of pupils representing key stage 1 and key stage 2. I held a telephone conversation with a representative

of the local authority. I toured the school, visiting all classes, accompanied by you. I held informal conversations with staff and pupils at different times during the inspection. I looked at a wide range of documentation including records of your monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, notes of governors' visits to the school and samples of pupils' work. I reviewed the single central record.

Context

Since the last inspection, a new deputy headteacher has been appointed, taking up his post at Easter 2016.

Main findings

You and your leadership team have acted swiftly to address the areas for improvement stated in the last inspection report.

You have put in place comprehensive systems of review and evaluation to clearly identify and make improvements needed in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You amended promptly the evaluation sheet that leaders use when carrying out lesson observations. This stipulates leaders' raised expectations, rightly focusing on the impact of teaching on the learning and progress of pupils. Key areas of scrutiny in lesson observations are explicit, such as subject knowledge, use of assessment information and challenge for all pupils, so teachers can be in no doubt what is expected of them. Feedback from leaders is used to create their personal teaching, learning and assessment planner: a working document that enables teachers to routinely reflect on their practice, note their targets for improvement, their own actions to be taken to achieve these and the support to be received from others.

The development of phase leaders' and subject coordinators' leadership skills has been rapid and productive, so that they have taken an increasingly active role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Through a range of support and training they have boosted their knowledge and confidence so they are able to lead training sessions and model the senior leaders' expectations. They have developed their skills so that their messages are clear with regard to improvements teachers need to make, with prompt follow up and further support provided as needed. At the same time, their influence as leaders has developed. They are approachable and their advice is sought by colleagues, who welcome collaborative planning and team teaching to help them move forward.

Your introduction of a new scheme for the teaching of mathematics has been a catalyst in transforming the working atmosphere in lessons, achieving what leaders set out to do. Namely, pupils are working more independently and collaboratively. They have greater perseverance and confidence to try out their own ideas, while

teachers are developing their questioning skills to challenge pupils to deepen their thinking and articulate their reasoning using more formal terminology.

Leaders carry out regular work scrutiny to evaluate the impact of teachers' marking and feedback. Examples of pupils' work I looked at during my visit demonstrated a consistency across all year groups in the use of the school's assessment policy. Pupils are clear about what teachers expect of them and can give very specific examples of ways in which the quality of their writing has improved because of the feedback their teacher has given them.

You and your leadership team have skilfully presented these new routines so that while you clearly specify your high expectations and priorities for improvement, you support teachers well through appropriate training and professional development opportunities. You carry out regular evaluations and teacher surveys, meticulously recording and analysing these to helpfully inform further training on a whole-school and individual level. As a result, there is a tangible shift in the culture of the school, with a boosted morale and more open approach to sharing good practice and ideas.

Leaders have implemented a range of successful initiatives to improve communication and engagement with parents. You regularly provide parents with guidance about the curriculum relevant to their child's year group, in written form and in information meetings. You follow up the completion of a topic with celebratory events to which parents are invited. Increasing numbers of parents attend school events, including assemblies. Leaders are aware of key messages to convey to parents and manage these sensitively, for example with regard to the opportunities for pupils to go on trips and attend after-school clubs, so that more pupils enjoy these valuable experiences.

Governors are clear on the impact of strategies you and your leadership team have put in place to address the areas for improvement in the school. They receive valuable support from the local authority. They are mindful of additional training and guidance they need in order to be in an independently well-informed position to ask leaders the right questions. They are arranging their training and the recruitment of new governors accordingly. They have been very supportive of leaders through the recruitment of new staff and in commissioning further support from the local authority teaching and learning consultant. Governors' visits to the school are recorded appropriately to highlight the relevance of the visit to school improvement.

External support

The school is supported well by the local authority, especially in the leadership development of phase leaders and support for the governing body. You have also completed helpful work with the local teaching alliance, and through visits to other

local providers organised.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser
Her Majesty's Inspector