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Mrs Carole Etchie
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Etchie

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Meridian Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 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 December 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:

- ensure that all senior staff embrace the changes that are necessary and enforce the high expectations of pupils and teachers consistently
- review the curriculum to make sure that pupils receive their full entitlement in all subjects, and publish the full curriculum map on the school's website
- improve adults' use of assessment information to plan learning that inspires and deepens pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum

- raise adults' expectations of children in early years so they have more opportunities to practise their basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school development plan and the post-Ofsted action plan were evaluated. I spent time in each class observing pupils learning. I scrutinised a range of documentation including pupils' assessment information and examples of pupils' work in books. The views of 39 parents, who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, were taken into account.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, the headteacher had an extended and planned period of leave which was covered by an interim headteacher.

The school has successfully recruited three teachers to replace those who are leaving at the end of the academic year.

Main findings

Leadership and management still require improvement as the pace of change has been too slow since the last inspection. Since the return of the headteacher, the pace is starting to improve and accelerate. She is clarifying the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders so that they become more clearly accountable for the progress that pupils make, and so that they embrace the necessary changes at the school. The headteacher, supported by the governing body, is now taking action so that the school can be judged to be good at the next inspection.

Leaders at all levels are not ensuring that the quality of teaching improves quickly enough. They do not systematically check that pupils are given consistently high-quality learning in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school. Subject leaders have not focused on the crucial areas for improvement and are not tackling weak teaching and poor practice. The evidence in books demonstrates that, too often, adults have low expectations of presentation of pupils' work and effort. From the evidence in exercise books, adults are not providing pupils with a rich and balanced curriculum which is fully in line with the national curriculum in all subjects. The school does not publish the curriculum for each year group on the school website.

In lessons, adults do not routinely support the school's own policies on behaviour for learning and expectations of uniform. They do not expect enough of pupils or provide them with enough interesting and inspiring learning opportunities across

the curriculum. As a result, some pupils are not achieving the standards of which they are capable. Where teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide them with inspiring work, for example in Years 1 and 6, then the pupils rise to the challenge and make accelerated progress.

The governing body has received its external review and has restructured as a result. Governors have clear roles and responsibilities so that they can now hold school leaders more fully to account for the performance of pupils. They have credible plans in place to visit the school more regularly to check the standard of education that the pupils receive. This ensures that they do not rely on information from staff that may be too positive.

The governing body has a clear vision for the school and governors are supportive of the changes that need to be made. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement, and are keen to ensure that the school now moves forward at a faster pace.

The school development plan and the post-Ofsted plan clearly link to the areas for improvement from the section 5 report. Termly updates are provided to the governing body. However, middle leaders are not routinely checking the quality of teaching. The impact of their work is not fully seen, because of a lack of consistency in applying the higher expectations of both themselves and of pupils. Staff have yet to receive subject knowledge training, particularly in mathematics, so that they can deliver the requirements of the curriculum.

Teachers are working on providing pupils with more opportunities to write. There is evidence on display to celebrate the work produced by the pupils. In Reception, children wrote sentences showing their understanding of Shakespeare's 'A midsummer night's dream'. However, the teachers are not consistent in applying the school's marking and feedback policy, despite the fact that the policy has been introduced twice over this year. Pupils do not receive the quality of feedback that helps to move their learning forward precisely enough. At times, pupils respond to the comments made by their teacher, but this is intermittent and teachers do not routinely insist that these responses are completed with care and attention. In the books seen, pupils too often continue to make the same mistakes.

The vast majority of children who start in the early years classes do so with skills and abilities that are at least average for their age. This year the progress of these children has been limited. The proportion of children who are leaving early years with a good level of development has declined and is lower than in previous years. They are less well prepared for the challenges of Year 1. The expectations and standards of writing have not increased until this summer term. The results on display demonstrate the capabilities of the children and what can be achieved in a short space of time.

The pupils work as hard as they are expected to in lessons. They show a desire to learn and make the most of what is on offer in lessons. During the inspection,

the pupils were respectful to each other and to adults. They particularly enjoyed the physical education lessons on the large field. When they respond to questions in class, pupils of all ages are articulate and thoughtful. Many parents who responded through Ofsted 'Parent View' commented on how happy their children are at Meridian Primary School.

I will return to the school during the next academic year to review further progress.

External support

The external support given to the school from the local authority has been extensive. During the time of the headteacher's absence, the local authority placed an interim headteacher into the school. The local authority continues to provide support both to subject leaders and the headteacher so that the pace can quicken and the school start to improve at a much faster rate. The local authority recognises that the pace of change has not been fast enough and has issued a letter of significant concern to school leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector