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Mrs Sharon Stone
Headteacher
Old Hall Junior School
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Dear Mrs Stone

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Old Hall Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 14 October 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 February 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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 visit, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, two subject leaders, two representatives of the governing body, two groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority. I considered a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan. We conducted a tour of the school together and visited all classes to see pupils and staff at work. I spoke with several parents at the beginning of the school day.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, there have been no significant contextual changes.

Main findings

You and other senior leaders are working effectively with all staff to raise your expectations of what pupils should achieve, particularly lower-attaining and disadvantaged pupils. Higher expectations of the quality of teaching are evident and more rigorous procedures to manage teachers' performance have been put in place.

Your school improvement plan is sharply focused on the issues identified at the last inspection. It identifies clearly the senior leaders and governors who are responsible for monitoring the progress being made by the school, as well as measurable success criteria. However, we agreed that this could be even more effective if interim milestones were included to help governors check progress at regular intervals and if the ways that actions are checked were more detailed.

There is a strong emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to accelerate the progress that pupils are making in English and mathematics. You have reviewed systems for checking on the quality of teaching and learning since the recent inspection. Senior leaders are regularly observing lessons, looking at work in pupils' books and considering information relating to pupils' achievements. As a result, teaching is improving.

Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the regular opportunities they have to review and respond to teachers' marking. They were proud to show me their workbooks with examples of detailed marking, as well as follow-up tasks to help them check their understanding and improve their work. For example, one pupil in Year 6 showed me how effective marking had helped him to understand that he did not need to use a capital letter when starting a responding clause. He confidently told me, 'I won't make that mistake again!'

You have made an impressive start to improving and strengthening the school's assessment systems. School leaders demonstrate detailed knowledge of the performance of individual pupils, based on teachers' accurate assessments of pupils' progress.

Your deputy headteacher showed me evidence of how changes to the daily provision for disadvantaged pupils in literacy and numeracy lessons are ensuring more rapid progress for those pupils. He is keeping a close eye on well-targeted intervention programmes to ensure that they remain suitably challenging at all times. An exciting range of wider opportunities is being used to help disadvantaged pupils develop skills which they can transfer to their academic learning. For example, one pupil explained that through learning to play the guitar he could now apply the skill of perseverance to his mathematics work.

Subject leaders are committed and enthusiastic. They are now playing a more effective role in supporting senior leaders to drive up standards through regularly monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in their

subject areas. They are providing teachers and teaching assistants with appropriate support, challenge, advice and training.

Attitudes to learning were positive in every classroom we visited; the behaviour of the pupils seen was consistently good.

Governors are contributing significantly to the improvements being made and take their responsibilities extremely seriously. Since the recent inspection, they have made sure that they have a clearer understanding of the impact of how the school is spending additional funding so that they can better hold leaders to account.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has responded quickly to the findings of the recent inspection by increasing their level of support to the school. For example, local authority consultants have been deployed to support the school. The link adviser makes regular visits to check on progress and to challenge you on the impact of your leadership.

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

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector