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Mrs Una Connolly
The Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Connolly

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wykeham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 September 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 March 2016. 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. The school should take immediate action to:

- set measurable targets in improvement planning to reduce the differences between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally
- make sure that all pupils are given challenging work which makes them think hard to speed up their progress, particularly in mathematics
- identify clear monitoring roles for governors in improvement planning
- evaluate the impact of interventions more systematically
- raise attendance rates for disadvantaged pupils.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A range of school documentation was scrutinised, including the external review of the pupil premium and its impact; school improvement plans; outcomes of monitoring activities; the impact of performance management; information about pupils' achievement; documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour and welfare, including attendance; and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Context

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes to staffing, following a restructuring of the staffing profile as a result of budget restraints. You have appointed a new assistant headteacher, eight new teachers, four of whom are newly qualified teachers, 13 support staff and one new office administrator.

Main findings

The rate of improvement since the last inspection has been too slow. You and governors recognise that there still remains a significant amount of work to be undertaken in order for the school to be judged good at the next section 5 inspection.

Your primary focus has been to raise the quality of teaching, which was the first recommendation in the last report. You have begun to tackle this on a variety of fronts and have been systematic in implementing the action plan to address weaknesses. Strategies include a coaching teacher who supports on an individual basis. Likewise, middle leaders now have greater responsibility for raising the quality of teaching through mentoring colleagues and providing feedback and support. However, you have had to deal with significant changes in staffing. This has diminished your efforts to improve the quality of teaching in order to raise attainment. The high turnover of staff means that you and other leaders are now training and supporting new members of staff, in order to secure consistently better teaching and drive up achievement.

The restructuring of staffing was necessary because of financial constraints. You have commendably used it as an opportunity to strengthen the profile of teaching. This has been achieved within a culture of openness where staff are not afraid to ask for help and guidance. In my discussion with middle leaders, they were quick to point out that staff morale is good and that teamwork is now a strength of the school. Nonetheless, with a relatively new team of staff, the pace of improvement has not been fast enough. Furthermore, despite providing staff with effective feedback, you concede that follow-up to make sure that everyone acts upon the advice given has not been rigorous enough. There are still significant inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including the guidance that pupils are given on how to improve their work further.

The recent appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator has secured some improvements in targeting interventions more precisely to the needs of pupils. However, although some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make better progress, there are still too many who underachieve. Improvement rates remain too slow. You have compared the progress of disadvantaged pupils from their starting points with the progress of other pupils in the school, instead of comparing their progress with that of other pupils nationally with similar starting points. This is further compounded by a lack of measurable targets in improvement planning to help speed up progress so that these differences decrease quickly.

You and other leaders have been thorough in gathering other progress and attainment information. You use this in regular meetings with teachers to decide how best to address the needs of individual pupils. Staff use a variety of intervention strategies to boost the progress of selected groups, including disadvantaged pupils. This was one of the recommendations identified in the external review of the pupil premium funding which governors undertook in June 2016. However, you and other key leaders have not evaluated the impact of these intervention strategies rigorously enough. Therefore, governors do not know if the pupil premium funding is used effectively. Plans for improvement do not detail

the governors' role in checking progress made towards identified priorities. They do not hold you and other leaders fully to account for your work.

You have focused on improving pupils' attendance and punctuality and have implemented a host of strategies. Although the attendance of some pupils has improved, including some pupils who are persistently absent, you accept that these strategies have not had sufficient impact. Attendance overall remains below average because of the low attendance of disadvantaged pupils in particular.

Pupils are hard-working. They have good attitudes to their learning. In every class visited almost every pupil was fully focused on their work and well motivated to achieve their best. Pupils are polite, respectful and caring. In my discussion with pupils, they said that behaviour has improved since your appointment as headteacher. This is confirmed by the behaviour logs, which show that incidents of poor behaviour have decreased. Pupils told me that 'people are more mature' and that you are 'firm but fair'. As a result of this, they said that teachers are too. Pupils appreciate the rewards they receive for good behaviour and they are eager to achieve a gold award to take home. It is clear that staff consistently implement the new behaviour policy, which promotes good behaviour. Pupils also confirmed that work is often too easy and that they are not being suitably challenged. This slows progress, especially in mathematics.

You have successfully re-engaged those parents who were unhappy with key aspects of the school at the time of the last inspection. The last school survey in March 2016 reflects almost all parents' satisfaction with all aspects of the school. This is the result of much-improved communication through a parents forum, coffee mornings, regular newsletters, and welcoming parents into school at the beginning and end of the school day.

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 adviser meets with leaders and governors half-termly to check the progress made in addressing key areas for improvement. The adviser has secured some additional funding for the school, including part funding for the coaching teacher.

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

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds
Her Majesty's Inspector