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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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James Pearce
Headteacher
Chuckery Primary School
Lincoln Road
Walsall
West Midlands
WS1 2DZ

Dear Mr Pearce

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chuckery Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 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 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 make sure that:

- teachers plan reading, writing and mathematics activities that better meet the needs of pupils of different abilities and help more pupils reach the standards expected for their age
- staff in the early years enable more children to reach a good level of development by the time they start Year 1
- senior leaders rigorously monitor teaching by:
 - placing a greater focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning
 - prioritising the actions teachers will take to help pupils make better progress
 - making clear to teachers when they will check that any agreed actions have been implemented and then systematically checking the impact of these actions on pupils' learning
- governors check that pupil premium expenditure is used effectively

- the school improvement plan identifies the precise actions that will be taken to raise pupils' achievement and improve teaching and it contains measurable success criteria so that governors can check the impact of the actions taken by school leaders.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, representatives from the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including senior leaders' feedback to teachers following lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work, the latest information about pupils' achievement, and information about the quality of teaching. You joined me on brief visits to some classes. We spoke with pupils about their learning and reviewed examples of pupils' work.

Context

Four new teachers have joined the school since the previous inspection in February 2016.

Main findings

You and other senior leaders have not acted swiftly enough to address the weaknesses in pupils' learning and teaching identified at the time of the last inspection. As a consequence, standards in reading, writing and mathematics across the school remain below those expected.

The 2016 provisional results of the Year 6 national tests results show that many of the pupils in Year 6 made expected progress from their different starting points. Despite this, standards were low. Over half of the pupils in Year 6 did not reach the standard expected for their age. There was a similar picture of low attainment in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. In the early years, half of the children did not reach a good level of development. In contrast, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was above the national average.

Work in pupils' books, brief visits to some lessons and the school's latest information about pupils' achievement confirm that standards are not rising quickly enough. This is because the activities that teachers plan do not sufficiently meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Activities are sometimes too difficult for lower-ability pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There were instances during this inspection when pupils could not read the information provided by the teacher. There were also cases of the most able pupils completing straightforward activities, such as writing simple sentences and completing basic mathematical calculations, when they were clearly capable of much more.

In mathematics, pupils, and especially the most able, are not sufficiently challenged. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to solve complex problems or to develop their reasoning skills. Teachers are steadily increasing the occasions pupils have to write. However, pupils' writing often contains spelling, punctuation and grammar errors. The presentation of pupils' work varies between classes and subjects. Some pupils do not form numbers and letters correctly. Pupils can use their knowledge of sounds and letters to read words, but some do not understand what they are reading or know how to find out the meanings of unfamiliar words.

In the early years, staff have started to meet together to identify what the children need to learn in order to help them reach a good level of development. However, the use of this information is still in the early stages. There are still occasions when the activities that the children complete do not help them to sufficiently develop their understanding of number, words, or letters and sounds.

The school's marking policy has recently been revised. This policy asks staff to be clear about what pupils are expected to learn and then to carefully check if pupils achieve this. However, teachers do not consistently follow the school policy. When I spoke with pupils in different year groups, some were unsure about what they were expected to learn by the end of their lesson.

Senior leaders regularly visit lessons and review pupils' work. However, they do not focus enough on the difference teachers are making to pupils' learning. As a consequence, the feedback teachers receive does not consistently make clear how teachers can better meet the learning needs of different groups of pupils. Following all monitoring, senior leaders and teachers discuss the actions teachers will take to improve their practice. However, these actions are not prioritised, so it is not clear to the teachers what requires the most urgent attention. Neither do senior leaders make clear to teachers when they will check that the agreed actions are being implemented or systematically check the impact of these actions on pupils' learning. This is contributing to continued weaknesses in teaching.

Pupils' attendance is improving and is closer to the national average for primary schools than previously. You are working well with staff and external agencies to encourage individual families to send their children to school regularly. Displays around the school acknowledge improvements in attendance and emphasise the importance of coming to school every day.

Members of the governing body are increasingly holding leaders to account for the performance of pupils. They are asking more precise questions about the achievement of different groups in different subjects. They are aware, for instance, that pupils' reading skills are not strong enough. Governors know how additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used. However, they do not check the impact of this expenditure carefully enough. The school's information about pupils' achievement shows that in all year groups there were a significant proportion of disadvantaged pupils who did not make enough progress last academic year.

The revised school improvement plan is an overly complex document that does not pay enough attention to the school's most pressing priorities. For example, the actions within the plan are not sharply focused on improving teaching and raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Also, there are not enough measurable success criteria within the plan. This makes it difficult for governors to check the impact of leaders' actions on teaching and pupils' learning.

I recommend an external review of the school's use of pupil premium.

External support

The support from the local authority has not had sufficient impact. Following a visit to the school in the summer term, the local authority's report did not provide leaders and governors with a correct view of the school's performance. This is because it did not accurately identify some of the weaknesses in the school. A more recent report has correctly pinpointed significant issues relating to pupils' achievement and teaching. The local authority has outlined its concerns in a letter to leaders and governors and issued the school with a pre-warning notice.

You have established a link with a local school. This partnership is recent and has not had a chance to make an impact.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi

Her Majesty's Inspector