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Alex Prout
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Dear Mrs Prout

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Parkfield School

Following my visit to your school on 11 November 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 April 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:

- hold senior leaders regularly and rigorously to account for the learning and progress of individual pupils and groups
- further improve the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment across the school through additional training and professional development
- ensure that all staff provide pupils with effective individual guidance for their next steps in learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, students, the chair of the interim academy body (IAB) and a representative of the IAB. I also held a telephone conversation with a third member of the IAB, representing the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The current school action plan (the raising achievement plan) was evaluated. A range of documents was scrutinised. I carried out two learning walks with senior leaders to a number of classes and scrutinised pupils' work in their books; this included some of the most able pupils' work.

Context

Following the intervention of the regional schools commissioner and the Department for Education (DfE) in August this year, the school's governing body was suspended and an interim academy board put in its place. A national leader of education was seconded to the school as interim executive headteacher (IEH) in September, due to the substantive principal's long-term absence.

Main findings

New systems for checking on teaching and pupils' progress that were introduced following the last inspection have not resulted in bringing about improved outcomes for pupils. This is because senior leaders did not monitor with sufficient rigour the quality of teaching and learning within the school or provide the appropriate guidance to teachers on how to improve their practice. In particular, leaders failed to check in more detail how well pupils' literacy and numeracy skills were being taught and developed and so pupils' progress stalled and standards in work dropped. This was clearly evident in the low achievement of pupils in their 2016 end of year examinations and assessments.

The work of the school to improve teaching and learning by checking pupils' understanding more thoroughly and by planning work which built closely on what pupils already knew did not have the desired impact in helping pupils improve and make more confident progress. Similarly, any challenging extension tasks for the most able pupils did not result in these pupils exceeding age-related levels in reading, writing or mathematics. Senior leaders accept that the reasons for this failure were their lack of rigour in monitoring school improvement initiatives and the distraction of the planned new school building project.

Strategies were introduced by the school following the inspection to ensure that teachers mark pupils' work more consistently and provide specific suggestions for correcting their work. However, not all comments guide pupils well enough and suggestions for improvement, when they are made, are not always followed up.

School leaders have worked diligently within the restrictions of the current temporary buildings to provide children in the early years with more opportunities to use the outdoor space in order to promote their physical development. Children are now also being provided with a wider range of activities to promote their communication and language skills.

The lack of focused, strong leadership has resulted in the low achievement of pupils in this past academic year. However, since the appointment of the IAB and the arrival of the IEH in September, senior leaders have received the support and good leadership they require to now carry out their roles effectively. Although it is as yet too early to evaluate any positive impact on improved standards for pupils, the most recent monitoring of pupils' learning is indicating that pupils are so far making better progress this academic year.

The changes in leadership brought about by the IEH since her arrival in September have been welcomed by all staff. Staff morale within the school has also improved as a result of more decisive and supportive leadership, although anxieties still exist over the timing for moving to the new school site. Senior leaders are confident that they now have the time and resources to bring about the necessary improvements to teaching and learning that will lead, in time, to raised standards and better outcomes for pupils throughout the school.

Better quality information is being given to the IAB about the underperformance of all pupils, including any disadvantaged pupils and the most able. A straightforward 'raising achievement plan' has been written and introduced by the IEH. This document sets a clear timeframe for securing and monitoring school improvements and who is responsible. However, it does not include a clear timeline for training and developing staff.

Members of the IAB say that they enjoy very good communications with the IEH and have confidence in her leadership, which is direct and collegiate. They understand the current challenges facing the school and the work being carried out to establish a competent senior and middle leadership and management structure throughout the school. A system has been established for the IAB to monitor the work of the senior leadership team and, where appropriate, provide challenge as well as support.

External support

You and your staff are drawing well on the support available from external partners to bring about training to improve the effectiveness of teachers and subject leaders. Members of the IAB have brokered training and development opportunities through their established links with a local teaching schools' network. Staff say they appreciate the opportunities they have had recently to visit other schools and work with colleagues in moderating pupils' work. These visits have helped them to feel less isolated as a school within the borough.

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

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

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector