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Ms Nadine O'Hara
Liberty Primary
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Dear Miss O'Hara

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Liberty Primary

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in April 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- sharpen improvement planning so that short-term measurable milestones can be assessed more regularly and leaders can be robustly held to account for the delivery of improvements
- ensure that leaders sharply analyse in greater detail progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language, for example those who are new to speaking the English language and those who are advanced bilingual speakers.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your deputy headteacher and the chair of governors. I met a group of Year 1, 2 and 6 pupils and discussed their views about reading. These pupils read their current class book and I scrutinised their home/school reading record. With your deputy headteacher, we visited each

classroom in the school to review improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. During our classroom visits, I spoke informally to a range of pupils about their work and the reading culture of the school. I reviewed the improvements to the monitoring of teaching and learning and the report from the most recent local authority visit to the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection in April 2016, two teachers have left the school. One class teacher was appointed in September 2016. The school's resource provision for up to six pupils with behavioural, emotional or social difficulties closed in July 2016. The school business manager left and was replaced with a new post-holder in September 2016. The senior leadership team has been restructured to ensure that there is further capacity to drive changes across this large school.

Main findings

You, your senior leaders and the governing body have a clear vision for the future of the school. It is evident that the 'can do' ethos reported in the previous inspection is bringing about steady improvement. You have a secure understanding of the changes necessary at Liberty Primary to drive the required improvements. You have written an effective action plan, which sets out a realistic but ambitious plan for the future of the school. However, more clearly breaking down the criteria for measuring success will allow governors to more clearly hold you and your team to account for the progress being made in making the school resolutely good. The plan for improvement is currently well under way. You have wasted no time in ensuring that improvements are made and that you work to ensure consistency.

You have sharpened the lines of accountability for ensuring high-quality teaching, learning and assessment. You and your leaders provide feedback to staff regularly about their work. These checks on teaching, learning and assessment take into account a wide range of information, such as assessment information, pupils' books and observations of teaching. This helps you to identify individual areas of improvement for staff. You provide staff training, where necessary, and ensure that individuals are clear about your expectations for how and when improvements should be evident in their work. This challenge is individualised effectively, thus creating a culture where staff strive to improve their teaching and leadership.

Governors now have a clearer focus on ensuring that leaders have evidence to support their assessments of the school's effectiveness. They are working more explicitly with middle leaders and this is providing governors with the evidence they need to understand the effectiveness of the school's work. However, you and your chair of governors accept that your post-Ofsted action plan should have clearer milestones to enable sharper assessments of progress being made in delivering the necessary improvements. For example, governors believe that the school is well ahead of schedule in creating a culture where pupils love reading. Breaking your

success criteria down to match key milestones will allow governors to be clearer as to how on track the school is to become good at the next full inspection.

With your leader for reading you have created a clear drive to promote reading across the school. Each classroom has a 'reading corner' that contains high-quality texts appropriate for the needs of individual pupils. Pupils talk of a growing sense that reading is 'everywhere in the school'. One Year 6 pupil eloquently explained: 'We talk about books with our friends now. I love Anthony Horowitz and I recommend him to my friends. His writing has helped me with mine. My stories are much more exciting as I have used the same style.' Older pupils are able to summarise the books they are reading. They read with the enthusiasm and maturity that would be required for an audio book. Over 200 pupils have now achieved the 'superstar readers' award, where pupils read every night for three weeks. This is a high-status reward and pupils talk with pride when they achieve it, not least because of their entry into the termly e-book reader raffle. Your competition to get pupils 'reading in unusual places' has also resulted in their understanding you can enjoy reading anywhere, for example on the embankment of the River Thames or on a garden swing. Consequently, many pupils are starting to understand that reading can be a fun leisure-time activity.

Staff are now quicker to identify pupils' misconceptions and therefore challenge their learning, especially in mathematics and English. Identified misconceptions are often used in subsequent lessons to help all pupils progress their learning. Your analysis of assessment information is enabling you to keep track of how pupils are doing over time and to adapt the work of the school to meet the needs of individuals and groups. Consequently, the progress of pupils is improving across the school and is more consistent than at the time of the previous inspection. The end of key stage national assessments in 2016 also support your belief that pupils' progress is improving. Progress for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Your disadvantaged pupils also made better progress than was typical nationally. However, despite this better progress some disadvantaged pupils did not attain as highly as all pupils nationally. You are ensuring that staff monitor Years 4 and 5 particularly closely to ensure that all pupils in these year groups catch up with their expected attainment.

With a large number of pupils speaking English as an additional language, you accept that the school could more clearly check on the progress of this group. While you track this group as a whole, you have not historically considered the progress of those new to the English language or those who are advanced bilingual. You accept this will help you to develop further your checks on key groups across the school and your plans for improvement.

You have created a culture where all leaders and staff are involved in reflecting on the effectiveness of their practice. Teachers are increasingly taking responsibility for observing each other and engaging in discussions about improving their teaching. Your development of a 'Liberty good practice directory' exemplifies the growth in

sharing good and better teaching, learning and assessment between staff. While there is a focus on ensuring that all teaching over time is at least good, you are working to develop good to outstanding practice. As a result, you have created a culture which is striving for excellence while caring for individual pupils and their needs.

External support

The local authority have provided a range of support to the school. They have provided half-termly challenge to ensure that governors and leaders are on track in their work to make the school a good one. The local authority education partner and consultants have used their understanding of the school's assessment information, the previous Ofsted report and consultant visits to challenge improvements. In particular, improved pupil progress and consistency in the teaching of guided reading have emerged out of work with the leader for reading.

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

Yours sincerely

David Storrie
Her Majesty's Inspector