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Mrs Dominique Osborne
Associate Principal
Edward Heneage Primary Academy
Edward Street
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Lincolnshire
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Dear Mrs Osborne

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Edward Heneage Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 23 November 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in May 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, the executive principal, chair of the school improvement board, subject leaders for English and mathematics, the special educational needs coordinator and a representative of the trust. The trust's statement of action and the school's improvement action plans were evaluated. Other documents were seen, including policies for teaching and learning and the management of pupils' behaviour. We made a series of short visits to several classes in the early years, and key stages 1 and 2.

Context

There have been many changes in staff since the previous inspection. The principal has left the school and has been replaced by you. To provide extra capacity to the senior leadership team, the trust has appointed an executive principal and a vice-principal who is responsible for teaching and learning.

Five teachers took up their appointments at the beginning of September 2016, replacing those who left at the end of the previous academic year. Two of these have leadership responsibilities, one for the early years and the other for the leadership of mathematics.

There have been no changes to the make-up of the governing body. However, a school improvement board has been established which has assumed some of the responsibilities of the local governing body to check the work of the senior leadership team as it takes the school forward.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The current senior leadership team, particularly you and the executive principal, has demonstrated strong determination in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You are intolerant of ineffective teaching and have taken swift and decisive action to improve the quality of provision in all areas of the school. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching, outcomes and pupils' behaviour. A greater sense of teamwork is emerging as higher expectations are being successfully communicated to all staff. Leaders at all levels are acutely aware that further work is required to become a good school but they are well placed to bring this about.

The school's improvement plan addresses all the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report, with clear strategies designed to secure a better-quality of education for all pupils. It contains precise deadlines for improvements to be realised, systems to monitor progress and, most importantly, clear expectations regarding the impact on pupils' achievement. It conveys a sense of urgency, a hallmark of the senior leadership team. The statement of action completed by the trust complements the work of senior leaders and contains appropriate support. The trust has been active in strengthening the capacity of leadership and has established a close working relationship with governors and key staff. This is providing the impetus required to bring about improvements, sooner rather than later.

Subject leaders are keen to make a major contribution to securing improvements in pupils' achievement. However, their action plans do not focus sufficiently on the skills, knowledge and understanding required for pupils to be well prepared for the next stage of their education. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency if all groups of pupils are to make consistently good progress and realise their potential.

Senior leaders are developing effective systems to monitor the impact of actions contained within the school's improvement plan. They have also established a range of mechanisms to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. These include regular lesson observations, book scrutinies and gathering pupils' views. Lesson observations would be more illuminating if there were a closer focus on the learning that is taking place during the lesson and the contribution made by the teacher to bring it about or not, as the case may be.

External reviews of governance and use of pupil premium funding were recommended at the section 5 inspection. The former review is under way and is due to be completed shortly. The pupil premium review was scheduled to commence on 6 December 2016. The governing body has not waited for its review to be completed before taking steps to improve its monitoring of the school's performance. A school improvement board has been established that includes senior leaders and governors who have the requisite skills and experience to hold the school to account. This is proving to be a positive initiative and is helping leaders to focus and reflect on the work they are doing to bring about change. The board is making a key contribution to the improvement process.

The quality of teaching is improving. As a result of leaders setting minimum expectations for the learning environment, classrooms are now bright and stimulating areas where pupils may thrive. Leaders have introduced a teaching and learning policy which outlines their expectations of staff. This is proving useful, but it needs to be more tailored to the current needs of the school as opposed to being a general document which could be used in any school.

The quality of feedback to pupils about their work is much improved from that seen during the previous inspection. Pupils talk confidently about their work and what they need to do to improve. More teachers are becoming adept at noticing pupils' misconceptions during lessons and taking steps to address them. Some are better at doing this than others and it remains an aspect of teaching that needs to improve.

Teachers' planning indicates that increased consideration is being given to the provision for disadvantaged pupils, most able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers receive effective guidance from the special educational needs coordinator. During visits to lessons undertaken during the inspection, teachers were making every effort to meet the needs of these

pupils. The level of challenge, particularly for the most able, is beginning to increase and those requiring additional support are being increasingly well supported by teaching assistants. More teachers are providing lessons that are interesting and involve pupils through effective questioning and thought-provoking activities.

Following the inspection in May 2016, governors and leaders identified that improving pupils' behaviour was a priority. Expectations of what is and is not acceptable behaviour have been effectively communicated to pupils, staff and parents. Guidance relating to behaviour management is in place and has been supplemented by training. Senior leaders now have a presence around the school at breaks, lunchtimes and lessons where they model good behaviour management and check that the agreed policy is being consistently carried out. This approach, combined with a greater focus on pupils' engagement during lessons, is leading to improved behaviour. During the monitoring inspection, no low-level disruption was evident. This marks a significant step forward from that which was observed six months ago. Most importantly, improved behaviour and attitudes to learning are beginning to enhance pupils' progress.

The newly appointed early years leader has successfully introduced changes that have improved the quality of provision since the beginning of the autumn term. The better practice observed in foundation stage 1 is now secure and being shared with foundation stage 2. As a result, the quality of teaching is more consistent across the phase. Staff are more focused on developing children's communication skills through careful questioning.

The outdoor provision now provides a range of opportunities for children to develop their language and writing skills. Regular phonics sessions are enabling children to understand the relationship between letters and their sounds. This is helping to lay the foundations for the acquisition of children's reading and writing skills. A much clearer picture of children's progress in the early years is emerging because assessments are more accurate, and it shows that children are currently making better progress than in the past.

There are mechanisms in place throughout key stages 1 and 2 that enable pupils' progress to be checked. These include regular pupils' progress meetings, which are used to identify any underachievement. In the past, teacher assessment, particularly within key stage 2, was overgenerous and therefore unreliable. Members of the new senior leadership team are so determined that teacher assessment is accurate that they are in the process of double-checking school-held data to ensure that this is so. Early indications suggest that pupils are currently making better progress than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' work seen during the inspection supports this view. However, senior leaders rightfully acknowledge that, although a lot has been achieved over the past few months, initiatives still need to be embedded further before outcomes reach the level to which the school aspires.

External support

Support provided by the David Ross Educational Trust since the previous inspection is focused, effective and meeting the needs of the school. The action taken to add capacity to the senior leadership team has been swift and productive, and this is why the school is clearly moving in the right direction.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler
Ofsted Inspector