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Dear Mr Phillips

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Farnham Heath End School

Following my visit to your school on 5 December 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 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:

- evaluate improvements to teaching, learning and assessment by their impact on pupils' progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, school leaders and members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Her Majesty's Inspector met with a group of pupils who have recently become 'learning ambassadors' and had a telephone conversation with the school improvement adviser. Teaching was observed during a series of visits to different lessons in English, mathematics,

science and art. A range of documentation related to pupils' progress and the school's use of pupil premium funding was reviewed. Her Majesty's Inspector requested a sample of pupils' work and reviewed this with school leaders.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in February 2016, 19 teachers have left the school and 15 have been appointed. You have restructured leadership roles and responsibilities in the senior team and among middle leaders. A new chair of governors took up his role at October half-term. There are plans for the school to join a multi-academy trust with a local secondary school on 1 April 2017.

Main findings

The previous inspection findings came as no surprise to you. You had identified that outcomes had declined, teaching, learning and assessment were inconsistent and that disadvantaged pupils were not making enough progress to catch up with their peers. You welcomed the opportunity to review the school's performance and focus on the necessary work to be done to improve the school.

Nevertheless, the inspection judgement was dispiriting for staff and morale dipped. You honestly acknowledge that some actions to improve the school immediately after the section 5 inspection led to staff overload. It is to your credit, and to that of staff, that you refocused your plans and changed some leadership responsibilities. You also made sure that you took more account of what staff were telling you about their workload and what needed to be done to improve outcomes for pupils.

Leadership and management are now stronger. You have worked closely with the deputy headteacher to unite and motivate the staff. You have made sound appointments to key positions, which has enabled you to extend and enhance the leadership team. Leaders and teachers who are new to the school have brought a refreshed impetus and confidence. You have wisely made good use of valuable existing leaders, who are now relishing the opportunity to take on key responsibilities and have their voices heard.

It is pleasing that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is now a crucial focus for the school's work at every level. In particular, all disadvantaged pupils have met with key staff to discuss any barriers to learning they may have and what helps them to learn. Information about disadvantaged pupils' ability, potential and any perceived barriers is now central to staff's planning. Carefully planned extra help in key subjects ensures that pupils are able to catch up. Subject leaders and senior leaders monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils closely as part of their routine observations and work scrutiny.

Leaders can clearly demonstrate where gaps in achievement are diminishing.

Increasingly, disadvantaged pupils are holding their own with their peers. However, you can also demonstrate where disadvantaged pupils are not doing so well and have a clear plan about what to do next. For example, leaders have noted that the most able disadvantaged pupils are not catching up as quickly as those coming from lower starting points, so have begun to make plans to tackle this. Leaders rightly take into account that some disadvantaged pupils have additional vulnerabilities and pastoral needs, so make sure that they receive extra support.

Pupils' books show that teachers are pushing for higher standards of presentation and organisation. You rightly streamlined your assessment system when you identified that the school's expectations of how teachers should mark pupils' work were unreasonable and not leading to improved progress for pupils. Nevertheless, there is still too much focus on what teachers are doing rather than how well pupils are learning. Leaders' monitoring of pupils' books does not focus enough on what it tells them about pupils' work and progress and whether actions to improve the school are making a difference.

Pupils told me that teaching had improved since the previous inspection, particularly in science and mathematics: topics are presented in a more interesting and stimulating way and there are more opportunities to get involved and express an opinion. During the monitoring inspection, it was clear that pupils were making the most of finding things out for themselves in practical science lessons, reasoning in mathematics, exploring symbolism in English and reflecting more deeply on thought processes in art. However, your own monitoring has identified that teachers are still working harder than pupils, who sometimes sit back and take minimal responsibility for concentrating and participating.

Following the section 5 inspection, governors were slow to review their own performance and make necessary changes, but are now in a much better position. They fully accept that previously they did not challenge the school enough and that standards had declined under their watch. It is now clear that governors are asking more challenging questions of school leaders and demanding more accountable information about pupils' progress.

External support

As part of the process of joining a local multi-academy trust, you have made a close link with an outstanding school, which has provided you with essential external evaluation. Leaders and staff have been able to share the work they are doing and access training and development to enhance what they are already doing to support each other within school. The school has also benefited from useful support and focused guidance from a school improvement adviser, commissioned from Surrey local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector