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Peter Howard
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Dear Mr Howard

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Fairisle Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 20 January 2017, 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 November 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in November 2015, 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- further improve the effectiveness of the governing body by governors evaluating the impact of their work and that of the school more regularly, and focusing more sharply on the progress made by different groups of pupils

- refine the school's improvement plan so that it includes targets about the achievement of pupils that enables progress to be measured during the course of the year
- ensure teaching provides good levels of challenge for the most able pupils, including those that are also disadvantaged.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, your senior leadership team and a group of teachers. Discussions were held with governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I also spoke to a representative from the local authority on the telephone.

I undertook a learning walk with you and the deputy headteacher. Together we observed four parts of lessons across the school and some small group work outside of the main classrooms. We spoke to a few pupils about their learning during the learning walk.

I reviewed the school's procedure for checking on the suitability of staff to work with children. The school's self-evaluation and improvement plans were evaluated. I also took account of the notes of visits by external consultants and local authority officers. I scrutinised a sample of teachers' planning and pupils' work from all year groups alongside two members of the senior leadership team. Together with the senior leadership team, we reviewed the school's own data about the current rate of pupils' progress.

Context

Since the time of the last inspection, a business manager has been appointed to the school. You have also recruited additional support staff to help with the increased intake of vulnerable pupils.

Main findings

You and your senior leadership team responded swiftly in order to address the areas identified as being in need of improvement at the time of the last inspection. Consequently, the safeguarding policy has been reviewed and now includes all of the required information. Staff have benefited from additional training about the dangers of extremism and radicalisation, and this aspect of teaching and learning is included in the school's curriculum. There is now clear and detailed information about the use and impact of the additional funding through the pupil premium and the sport funding. The pupil premium is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils in mathematics. A good example is through the purchase of practical resources that provide pupils with concrete experiences to help them understand mathematical concepts such as place value. The school has a suitable action plan

that includes all the areas identified as being in need of improvement. However, while some aspects include quantified targets, others do not. For example, the section about pupil outcomes does not provide targets against which progress can be measured, even though senior leaders have this information recorded elsewhere.

Together with your senior leaders, you have made effective use of external trainers and support, from the local soft federation of primary schools, to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics. You have tackled weaknesses in teaching, decisively. For example, the quality of teaching in Year 3 now builds effectively on pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1. Teachers spoke very positively about the coaching and guidance they receive. They value the support provided by senior leaders to help them to improve their practice and the quality of their planning. Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of how to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in mathematics. This was confirmed in my observations of teaching and learning across the school, as well as by the work in pupils' books. The good quality of teachers' planning reflects the extent to which they plan carefully, taking account of what pupils have learned and how well they progressed in previous lessons. This results in amended plans that respond to pupils' additional needs and misconceptions. Consequently, teaching is helping to fill gaps in pupils' learning in mathematics, and is helping pupils to make much better progress than has previously been the case. The difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers is reducing. However, teaching does not provide enough challenge to stretch the most able pupils, including those that are also disadvantaged.

Following a dip in results in 2016, together with your senior leaders, you gathered and checked all of the available information to ascertain why results had been so disappointing. You have since developed a much more rigorous system for tracking and checking on the progress made by different groups of pupils. This is shared with teachers, who spoke enthusiastically about the progress made by different groups of pupils in their class, including those that are disadvantaged. Regular pupil progress meetings provide a good opportunity for staff to review the progress made by pupils, and to identify additional support for those at risk of underachieving. Together with your highly effective senior leadership team, you have raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. You have also helped to raise pupils' aspirations so that they are happy to work hard and aim high. This is also reflected in pupils' good levels of attendance and punctuality.

Together with staff, you are helping pupils to develop a desire to learn. This is also having a very positive impact on the exemplary behaviour in lessons and around the school. In the lessons observed, pupils were all working purposefully and collaboratively. The recent investment in a range of new, high-quality reading books is increasing pupils' love of reading. This in turn is helping to further improve pupils' already good standard of writing. Current rates of progress are much stronger than they were this time last year. The proportion of pupils working at age-related expectations and exceeding expectations is already higher across all year groups

than it was at the end of the last academic year. If the rate of progress currently being made by pupils is maintained, standards are set to rise significantly by the end of this year.

Governors were initially slow to take action following the section 5 inspection. Although the external review helped them to identify aspects of their work that could be improved, it did not help governors to recognise the speed with which improvements were needed. Nevertheless, governors now challenge school leaders more effectively, for example about the use and impact of the pupil premium. Governors benefited from their links with governing bodies, from within the federation, to help them to reflect on how they can become more effective. Although they have developed their own action plan, they recognise that this is lacking in detail and does not include stringent timescales. Governors now recognise the need for them to drill down more rigorously on data about the progress made by different groups of pupils. In addition, they need to assess the impact of their own work and that of the school against the priorities in the school improvement plan.

The school continues to have rigorous systems to check on the suitability of staff to work with children, and keeps pupils safe.

External support

Leaders, managers and teachers benefit from the highly effective training provided by external consultants, particularly in mathematics and to further improve the quality of leadership and management in the school. The local authority and external consultants provide the school with good support and clear and helpful feedback.

The external support provided to governors has not had the same strong impact as that provided to the rest of the school. Governors would benefit from additional external support and guidance to enable them to become even more effective in their role.

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

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector