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Mrs Joanne Williams
East Stanley School
Chester Road
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Dear Mrs Williams

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to East Stanley School

Following my visit to your school on 13 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 March 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 March 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- accelerate pupils' progress in key stage 2, building upon improving outcomes in early years and key stage 1
- continue to refine assessment processes to provide robust pupil progress information across the school
- develop parental involvement with pupils' learning and make effective use of the information gathered about parents' views.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the mathematics subject leader to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Meetings with six members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority provided additional information. I evaluated the school improvement plan. We visited classrooms together, spoke with pupils and looked at pupils' work. A range of documents were scrutinised, including records relating to current pupil progress information and governing body minutes. I checked documentation and information linked to safeguarding.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been changes to staffing and governance. A teacher has taken up post in key stage 2 to replace a teacher who has left the school and there are five new governors.

Main findings

You have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching. This has included staff visiting other schools to consider effective practice and the introduction of systems, which help identify the expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. All staff have received training to improve the quality of their questioning and we noticed examples of how this is improving their practice during our visits to classrooms. Teachers are starting to plan lessons which better match pupils' needs. This is because they are beginning to make effective use of the recently introduced approach to assessing and recording pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There is evidence that teachers are developing their approaches to evaluate pupils' learning during lessons. However, sometimes they miss opportunities to assess pupils' learning and, as a result, they do not address pupils' misconceptions promptly enough.

Improvements in teaching are having a positive impact upon pupils' outcomes, particularly in early years and by the end of key stage 1. The proportion of pupils working at the expected levels in key stage 1 was above that found nationally in writing and mathematics. However, the numbers of pupils working at greater depth in mathematics and particularly in reading needs to improve. Pupils' phonics skills are improving and the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved to very close to the average found nationally. There is still further work to do to ensure that key stage 2 outcomes improve, particularly in reading, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling. Your recently developed assessment and recording systems and regular tracking of pupils' progress is helping you to check pupils' progress towards their more challenging targets. Support from the local authority and moderation with other schools is helping you to establish more accurate assessment judgements. Your current pupil progress information shows a more positive picture for current

pupils' progress. However, you need to continue to refine these approaches to ensure that you eliminate the large differences, found in 2016, between your teacher assessments and pupils' end of key stage 2 national assessment results.

The English and mathematics subject leaders are checking the quality of teaching more regularly and systematically. This is helping them to identify where staff require training to improve their teaching skills, including subject knowledge. Appropriate training more specifically designed to meet staff needs is starting to improve teachers' practice. For example, there is evidence that teachers are beginning to better develop pupils' mathematical reasoning skills following training in this aspect. There is still more work to do to accelerate pupils' learning in mathematics, particularly in key stage 2. Better use is now made of available lesson time. A review of timetables by the English subject leader identified the need to increase the time available and regularity of the teaching of reading. You have implemented the required changes and checked for consistency of application of these across the school. You recognise that the next step is to evaluate how effective teaching is in this subject area and the impact upon pupils' outcomes.

You and your leaders are promoting higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. For example, end of year pupil targets, based upon current learning and aspirations to accelerate progress, are in place for reading, writing and mathematics. Termly pupil progress meetings are now holding teachers accountable to the milestones required to achieve these targets.

You have begun to take action to improve pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain. This is beginning to have a positive impact; for example, older pupils were able to share with me some of their learning from the multi-faith week that you held last term. Communication with parents is improving and you have recently developed the school's website. While you have surveyed parents' views last term, you have not yet analysed the findings from this feedback. An analysis of this information may further assist with your communication with parents and your aim to provide more opportunities for parents to support their child's learning.

Governors are improving their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This is helping them to provide better levels of support and challenge to leaders. An audit of governor skills, a review of governance and associated training, is beginning to sharpen governors' ability to hold leaders more accountable for accelerating pupils' progress and raising attainment. Suitable arrangements are in place to support the induction of new governors who have recently joined the governing body. Changes to governing body committee membership are better matching governors' skills and interests to the school's needs.

You have taken steps to improve the quality of the outdoor learning areas. Along with governors, you have clear plans in place to develop further the physical organisation and resources in this part of the school. Overall, children's outcomes are improving by the end of Reception and the proportions achieving a good level of

development are improving. While not yet at the proportions found nationally, the numbers of children well prepared for starting key stage 1 are increasing. However, the proportion of disadvantaged children who are achieving a good level of development has remained static for the last two years. Improving outcomes for this group of children remains an area for particular focus.

You have produced a plan, which includes appropriate actions, to address the areas for improvement in the previous inspection report. The plan has precise improvement targets, which are beginning to enable governors to challenge senior leaders. Your calendar of checking activities is helping you and your leaders to maintain a sharper view of where school improvement is taking place and to identify any 'slippage' in the plan which needs to be addressed. There is now a more consistent application of whole-school approaches, such as the teaching of reading, because leaders check that staff are adhering to agreed systems.

External support

The local authority has provided regular support and challenge which has had a positive impact upon the school's improvement. Well-targeted leadership development, including for training for governors, is assisting the development of leaders' skills to plan and check for improvement. Appropriate support to improve the quality of teaching and improve early years' provision is helping the school to improve in these areas. Leaders and staff have visited a range of schools to consider effective practice linked to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Reeves

Her Majesty's Inspector