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Mrs Bessa Cador
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Dear Mrs Cador

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wrenbury Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 December 2015. 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:

- ensure that all disadvantaged pupils attend school regularly
- ensure that all staff challenge the most able pupils, in both key stages 1 and 2, so that they make the best possible progress.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and the deputy headteacher; the chair and four other members of the governing body; a representative from the local authority;

and two groups of pupils. I looked at the work of some pupils in both key stages 1 and 2. I evaluated the school action plan and scrutinised other key documentation. I also accompanied you on a tour of the school.

Context

A new deputy headteacher took up her post in October 2016. From January 2016 to July 2016, the Year 3/4 class was taught by a long-term supply teacher. There is now a full complement of permanent staff in the school. There has also been an increase in the number of full-time teaching assistants in the school.

Main findings

There is no doubt that, under your leadership, the school has continued on the road to recovery that you had embarked upon at the time of the last inspection. Your collaborative style of leadership means that you have successfully taken the whole school community with you on this journey of improvement.

You have created an action plan that effectively focuses on the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. You provided me with clear evidence of the actions that leaders have taken over the last twelve months and the impact that these have had on pupils' progress.

The work in pupils' books provides strong evidence that the quality of teaching has improved across the school. However, you believe that there is more work to be done to ensure that all pupils are benefiting from consistently good teaching. You have a precise understanding of each teacher's strengths and areas for further development, and provide relevant support in an appropriate manner. The collaborative ethos that you have created means that all who work in the school are keen to develop their practice.

You and governors have invested time and resources to ensure that teaching assistants have a positive influence on pupils' learning. Governors have made funds available to employ more full-time teaching assistants. More importantly, you have provided all teaching assistants with high-quality training to enable them to be effective in their role. They are highly valued members of staff who feel empowered to take greater responsibility for the pupils with whom they work.

Even though she has only been at the school for a short time, the new deputy headteacher has strengthened the leadership capacity of the school significantly. Alongside this, Year 6 pupils are benefiting enormously from her very strong teaching. The work in their books shows that they are being challenged to reach very high standards. However, this challenge is not evident across all classes, particularly for the most able. While support has always been there to help the least able pupils, teachers and teaching assistants have not focused enough on challenging the most able pupils to reach the highest standards.

Now you have a stable group of full-time teaching staff, you have been able to develop the role of middle leaders across the school. This new group of leaders is receiving effective training and coaching. You have given them time to develop the aspects of the curriculum for which they are responsible, including spending time in classes and looking at pupils' work. These leaders are now playing a key role in driving improvements in teaching and pupils' outcomes in their respective areas.

The introduction of the new whole-school approach to writing came too late to have an impact on the performance of Year 6 pupils last year. As predicted, their progress in writing was significantly below average and in the lowest 10% nationally. However, the positive impact of this new approach, coupled with very strong teaching, means that the current Year 6 are making much better progress in writing. There is clear evidence in books and from work displayed throughout the school that pupils in both key stages are now writing more confidently and for a range of purposes.

You have introduced a new system for tracking pupils' progress more effectively. Staff and governors have received training on this new system which has helped them to understand the part they play in improving outcomes for all pupils in the school. You are confident that the current data is accurate. It presents a positive picture about the progress that pupils are making, including those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The work you did to improve the teaching of phonics led to a significant increase in the number of pupils that met the expected standard at the end of Year 1 in 2016, which was above the national figure. The proportion of children that achieved a good level of development in the early years foundation stage was also above the national figure. While rightly pleased with these improved outcomes, you retain a sharp focus on embedding strong practice in the early years. This a high priority for you, as you understand the importance of children getting off to a flying start if they are to make the best possible progress.

The pupils I spoke to during the inspection were overwhelmingly positive about their school describing it as 'awesome', 'fabulous' and 'fantastic'. It is clear that they value the support they receive from staff and that they enjoy their learning. Older pupils commented on improvements since the last inspection, including the new approaches to writing and mathematics, which they believe are helping them to make better progress.

Staff and pupils alike embrace the school motto, 'We All Matter'. This is a school that puts the well-being of children at the heart of all that it does. The family ethos is embodied in such activities as the grandparents' lunch, which was taking place on the day of the inspection. Children at Wrenbury feel safe, valued and happy, which helps them to learn more effectively. It is therefore a shame that some disadvantaged pupils are missing out on this great experience by not attending school regularly.

Governors take their responsibilities very seriously. They have played a key part in bringing about recent improvements. The governing body now has the skills and expertise to challenge and support you and your staff effectively. Governors are proactive and reflective about their own practice. Although this was not a recommendation at the last inspection, they decided to commission an external review of governance. They have used the findings of this review to sharpen further the way in which they work.

External support

The local authority recognises the leadership capacity that exists within the school. However, it is keen to ensure that you have the necessary support on your journey to becoming a good school. Consequently, it has very recently brokered a partnership with a local teaching school. This partnership will provide support for you from a national leader of education, and a specialist leader in education for the early years staff. This support, which also includes wider staff training, is tailored to the needs of your school. The impact of this partnership will be evaluated over the coming months. You are also working collaboratively to share good practice with other local primary schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne
Her Majesty's Inspector