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16 March 2017

Mrs Ali Hambley
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Dear Mrs Hambley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Thurlton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 March 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 October 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 recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- implement systematic procedures to collate assessment information, to show clearly how well all pupils are progressing
- until these procedures are put in place, continue to observe teaching and scrutinise pupils' books so that the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress can be illustrated fully.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and your current self-evaluation were evaluated. I met with a group of pupils to gain their views on the improvements

being made. I held telephone conversations with a representative of the school's interim executive board (IEB), a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of Hobart High School. An opportunity to walk the school, led by one of your senior pupils, enabled me to see pupils at work in lessons and the changes that have been made to brighten up classrooms and corridors.

Context

Since the last inspection, members of the IEB have appointed you as substantive headteacher. One teacher has left the school. You and an experienced, temporary teacher share responsibility for teaching the class of older pupils. Plans to become an academy with the Clarion Academy Trust, with Hobart High School, are well under way.

Main findings

You have acted promptly to make a number of changes which are leading to improvement since the last inspection. There is a lot to do to get the school to being good. However, you have approached this task with energy and enthusiasm, and show total commitment to improving the quality of education provided. Parents and carers recognise and appreciate the improvements you are making. Meeting them and their children each morning as they arrive in the playground is enabling you to foster good relations with the community.

You have rightly prioritised strengthening the quality of teaching by taking decisive action when it falls short of your raised expectations of staff. You have also given staff time to attend training and observe good practice in other schools. New arrangements to share responsibility for teaching pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 in the same class appear to be working well.

Our short visits to classrooms confirmed your views that teachers are preparing different tasks for pupils. The most able are being suitably challenged and are making improved progress. Pupils' books show that the quality and quantity of written work completed have increased significantly. Some of the work done by older pupils on life in Anglo-Saxon times, and how it relates to the school's local surroundings, is of a high quality. Your emphasis on improving pupils' presentation of their work is paying dividends. Pupils who received certificates for their good work in Friday's celebration assembly were thrilled to receive them and show them to their parents.

My short meeting with pupils also confirmed that expectations of them are higher. They say that they are given much harder work to do, and feel sufficiently challenged in their writing. They have spellings to learn and are tested each week. Regular opportunities to practise letter formation and handwriting are leading to greater consistency and better-quality presentation. They are also expected to produce a piece of good-quality extended writing in literacy lessons every Thursday, and two examples of creative writing in other subjects each week. A revised

marking policy has been introduced recently. At this stage, it is too early to gauge the full impact of these new procedures.

You have updated the school's improvement plans. Plans contain the main priorities for improvement, including those areas identified during the last inspection. They also have suitably challenging targets and clear timescales to monitor the rate of improvement being made.

You and members of the IEB feel that there are no barriers preventing you from becoming a good school. You have prioritised getting the quality of teaching right in classrooms. Nonetheless, some weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection remain. At this stage, you do not have good-quality systems and procedures to collate and analyse assessment information. You are working with local authority advisers to formulate new procedures, and intend to install information technology to help you record and analyse information systematically.

You recognise that, until revised procedures are in place, information gained from your current monitoring needs to illustrate clearly the progress being made by each pupil. Presenting an accurate overview of pupils' progress is essential, as overall attainment measures in such a small school will not provide a full picture of how well pupils are doing.

Further improvements are needed to the school's facilities. In the Reception and Year 1 class, the rich, vibrant environment indoors is not matched by the outdoor area, which provides very limited opportunities for play and child-led learning. Some changes have been made to make the area safe and tidy it up, but at this stage the outdoor learning area remains underdeveloped.

External support

Regular meetings of the IEB include representation from the local authority. This strategic group is holding you accountable for making improvements and is overseeing the school's strategic development as it moves towards becoming an academy. You are working closely with the headteacher of a local secondary school and consulting with the local community to ensure a smooth transition later this year. The local authority feels that a lot of ground has been covered since the inspection, due to your hard work and willingness to work with others.

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

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector