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Mr Andrew Jenkins
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Dear Mr Jenkins

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dovecote Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 28 February 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 September 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 September 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are not 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:

- improve the quality of teaching of phonics to enable more pupils to make faster progress with their reading
- accelerate the progress of pupils in key stage 1, particularly for those pupils who did not reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year
- ensure that teachers are trained in the teaching of grammar and spelling
- enable pupils to improve their punctuation when writing complex sentences
- further develop pupils' skills to compose an extended piece of writing
- enable more pupils to spell frequently occurring words appropriate to their age and to correct their spelling mistakes

- develop links with parents so that they can support their child's learning at home
- ensure that the school development plan has measurable success criteria by which leaders and governors can check if actions taken have been successful or not.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, teachers, pupils, members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair, and a representative of the local authority. I also met with some parents before school and heard some pupils read. I looked at the school's self-evaluation and evaluated the school improvement plan. I visited most classrooms and looked at the pupils' work. I reviewed documentation related to performance management, the outcomes of monitoring activities, attendance and safeguarding.

Context

Since the inspection last September, one teacher from the Reception Year has left the school and the leader for mathematics has resigned his leadership role.

Main findings

Leaders have been too slow to make improvements to the quality of teaching following the inspection five months ago. Teachers have not yet received training to improve their teaching of phonics, spelling and grammar. These areas for improvement were identified at the last inspection. Too many pupils are still not making the progress they should.

Members of the governing body are knowledgeable about the improvements required and have challenged leaders to raise the expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, it is more difficult for them to hold leaders to account because the school development plan does not have sharp enough targets by which they can judge if the actions taken have been successful or not.

The teaching of phonics requires improvement. The teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough to ensure that all pupils fully participate in their learning and make rapid progress. Pupils' misconceptions are not addressed quickly enough and therefore pupils are not consistently learning from their mistakes. While most pupils know their letter sounds, some pupils struggle to blend their sounds to read unfamiliar words. Not all pupils read regularly at home. Leaders have not worked well enough with parents to inform them how they can support their child to read at home. Furthermore, the school has not made the homework policy clear to all parents.

The school has recognised the need to improve how it teaches phonics and has organised training for staff later this month.

Pupils' use of grammar and punctuation through the school is not good. While many pupils are able to punctuate simple sentences, they struggle to use punctuation correctly when writing more complex sentences. Pupils' spelling of high-frequency words varies too much. Some older pupils are misspelling words they should know. In addition, too many pupils are struggling to produce more extended pieces of writing independently. The quality of the pupils' writing is not sustained well enough from the beginning to the end.

Leaders have recognised the weaknesses in pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation abilities and have organised training for staff in the near future to improve the quality of teaching.

Leaders have improved the quality of feedback given to teachers about their classroom practice. Leaders have focused on the quality of questioning and have given specific advice to teachers as to how more probing questions could have ensured that pupils had a deeper understanding of the concepts studied.

The early years leader has trained some teaching assistants to further improve their questioning skills. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this work.

You now lead all the meetings with teachers to review the progress the pupils are making. Teachers recognise that they are accountable for the progress the pupils are making and are aware that these reviews are now more robust than previously.

The school's tracking system shows that more pupils are on track to achieve age-related expectations this year than previously. However, too many low-ability pupils in key stage 1 have not made accelerated progress from the Reception Year to be on track to meet the age-related expectations by the end of Year 2.

Pupils' attendance is improving and is now just below the national average. The school staff have been very proactive with pupils and their families to encourage good levels of attendance. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is improving, but remains below that of other pupils in the school. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has dropped sharply from last year and is now broadly in line with the national average.

External support

The leaders have valued the support they have received from the Transform Teaching School. The support has improved how leaders observe teaching and provide feedback. The teachers reported that the feedback by leaders was more focused following the latest monitoring activities and has helped them to improve their teaching. In addition, subject leaders say that they have benefited from meeting other subject leaders within the teaching school to further develop their leadership roles. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of this work.

The local authority has supported leaders in improving how they monitor pupils' progress. It monitored leaders' questioning during pupil review meetings. These

meetings are now more robust. The school improvement adviser has supported the governing body to strengthen the appraisal process for the headteacher.

However, the local authority has not provided enough support to ensure that the school's improvement planning is sharp enough to enable the governing body to hold leaders to account well enough.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch
Her Majesty's Inspector