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Ms Claire Temple
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Dear Ms Temple

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sandbrook Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 January 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 January 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 recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- make marking and feedback consistent in accordance with the school's policy
- accelerate progress in English and mathematics to improve attainment, especially in key stage 2.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher. I met with a group of 11 parents, who shared their views about the school. I also met with a group of pupils in Year 6 and talked informally throughout the day with other pupils. I had a discussion with the local authority's school improvement adviser to

discuss the action taken since the last inspection and the level of support provided. I also met with the principal of a local teaching school, who has been providing training and support. I met with three members of the governing body, including the vice-chair. I examined a variety of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, its self-evaluation summary, additional assessment documentation, minutes of meetings, documents connected with safeguarding and records of your checks on the quality of teaching and learning. We also carried out a series of joint visits to classrooms to look at pupils' progress in English and mathematics. I also analysed a selection of books from pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been a number of changes of staff, which has caused some instability. You currently have three out of 10 teachers who joined the school at the beginning of the current school year, two of whom are newly qualified teachers.

Main findings

You and your senior leaders are improving progress for your pupils and the quality of teaching. After analysing the published assessment information for 2016, you recognised that pupils' attainment is still not good enough and that you need to ensure that pupils make faster progress in order to improve it.

You have a very clear action plan that addresses the areas for improvement that were raised in the previous inspection report. You also devised actions to tackle weaknesses that emerged in the 2016 assessment information, such as progress in reading in key stage 2. You have selected precise success statements that focus on the intended impact of your actions on pupils' achievement in English and mathematics.

You took decisive action to tackle some underperformance in teaching in key stage 2, which resulted in the appointment of two new teachers in September and October 2016.

The quality of teaching is improving. You have put in place a new approach to managing the performance of teachers, linking it very closely to the requirements of the school's improvement plan and the teachers' standards. There are frequent checks on how well teachers are meeting their targets and how well pupils are making progress, especially in English and mathematics. You have an electronic communication system for staff in school, which you use to give teachers prompt feedback on their strengths and areas for development and to make sure that teachers implement your suggestions for improvement.

You have also revised your feedback and marking policy to focus on moving pupils

forward by close analysis of gaps in pupils' knowledge, which teachers then promptly address. You have also developed stronger questioning techniques, which involve constantly challenging pupils to justify their answers or improve their work, both orally in class and in writing in their workbooks. However, you acknowledged that there is still some inconsistency in the way teachers apply this policy.

As a result of these processes teachers now have higher expectations of their pupils, and their work, especially in writing, is improving well. In Year 6, for example, pupils show high levels of control of language, using advanced punctuation and sentence structures. They also engage the reader well with an appropriate style, using sentences such as 'They plunged to their death as the cruel ocean stared at them from below' when writing myths and legends. There are also good opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects, such as writing about ways in which Easter is remembered in religious education. However, you recognise that in order to improve attainment, especially in English and mathematics, there is a need for even faster progress.

You have made sure that your vision for the school's improvement is shared with all staff and parents. You have built a staff team that demonstrates positive relationships, is clear about the school's priorities and is working hard to secure improvement for your pupils. You also communicate more frequently with parents now, regularly keeping them up to date with activities at the school and making sure that they know what the school is doing to improve.

Parents who spoke to me were very positive about the improvements they have seen, especially the level of support you provide to them and their children when they need it. They appreciate the variety of extra-curricular clubs you provide, such as gardening club or choir, and they say that you and your staff look after their children well and keep them safe.

Your safeguarding records are thorough and detailed, showing prompt responses to concerns and referrals to other agencies when required. Your record of checks on members of staff is compliant.

Year 6 pupils who met with me told me that they feel safe in school and are confident that adults will manage any problems they may have. They understand different forms of bullying, but say that it rarely happens in school. They recognise some of the improvements that have happened since the last inspection, most notably the helpful displays in classrooms that support their learning and the new method of teaching mathematics, which they say has made them feel more confident about the subject.

Governors understand the school's strengths and areas for development well. They challenge you and your senior leaders strongly, asking demanding questions about pupils' achievement and the effectiveness of strategies and interventions that you have introduced to bring about improvement.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support to the school in order to raise standards. The adviser has made a significant contribution to the developing picture of improvement by commissioning support from a local outstanding teaching school and visiting regularly to challenge and verify the work of you and your senior leaders.

The local teaching school has also provided support for teachers, working with them on refining their teaching methods to produce better progress among pupils. This support is having a positive effect, as the quality of teaching and learning is improving.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector