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Mrs Jackie Moss
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Moss

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Trent Vale Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 2 May 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 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the mathematics coordinator, a leader responsible for the pupil premium funding, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. I visited all classes in key stage 1 and met with a group of pupils. I looked at a sample of the pupils' mathematics work.

Main findings

You revised the school's action plans quickly after the section 5 inspection and made sure that appropriate priority has been given to dealing with the inspection recommendations. I found that there was a clear understanding of, and commitment to, those priorities among the governing body and the staff. Together, you have put into action a unified and focused approach to improving the school. I found evidence of planned improvements being put into practice consistently.

The senior leaders and the governing body are monitoring the implementation of the planned actions routinely and systematically. The leaders are looking for and the governing body is demanding evidence that the actions being taken are making a difference for the pupils. This has helped to ensure a good pace of progress since the inspection.

The latest information held by the school indicates that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress currently than was the case. As a group, they are making better progress at the moment than other groups of pupils at the school. In some individual instances, that progress has not been enough to help the pupils to catch up with the same levels of skills and knowledge as their peers because they started at lower levels than their peers. The individuals are known well to you and the staff. You understand well the difficulties faced by those pupils and are taking action to help them with the difficulties.

You and the senior leaders have introduced changes to the ways in which mathematics is taught. The changes have enabled the teachers to identify the learning needs of the pupils more precisely than previously, including for the most able pupils and for disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, the teachers are devising work for the pupils which challenges and extends the learning of the most able suitably. Also, the teachers follow up more effectively when the pupils have not grasped the intended learning, which results in the pupils correcting errors and getting back on track.

The mathematics work set for the pupils is now planned routinely around problem-solving exercises. In one notable example, I saw the pupils working busily on problems related to an educational visit to Tamworth castle, which they undertook recently.

I also saw examples of the pupils being questioned purposefully and effectively in lessons. The teachers prompted the pupils to think and to explain their reasoning. The pupils did so with varying degrees of success, but the teachers listened to their responses carefully and adapted the lessons accordingly.

The changes to the teaching have been effective in motivating the disadvantaged pupils, particularly the boys. The boys told me emphatically that mathematics was now their favourite thing about the school.

External support

The local authority brokered an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium. Although the draft report from the review only became available the day before this inspection, the process leading to the report has already proved useful. It has supported a sharper focus on how to get the best out of the pupil premium and led to changes in the way that the school is working. The local authority has put in place a programme of support that you and the governing body are finding helpful, particularly with planning improvements and in checking on how much progress the school is making. You are supplementing the local authority's support through membership of a teaching school alliance. Those links are providing relevant opportunities for staff training and development.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss
Her Majesty's Inspector