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Mrs Denise Williams
West Gate School
Glenfield Road
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Dear Mrs Williams

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to West Gate School

Following my visit to your school on 9 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 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:

- check more closely the judgements that measure the progress pupils are making to meet the outcomes in the education, care and health plans.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, four middle leaders, three members of the governing body including the chair and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was scrutinised. I observed teaching and learning across the school, and scrutinised documentation about pupils' learning.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, three more middle leaders have been appointed. Two teachers have resigned and two teachers have been appointed. The school is currently consulting on a new staff structure. There has also been a new chair of the governing body and three new governors appointed.

Main findings

The headteacher and the governors have taken prompt action to improve the school's performance following the previous monitoring visit. Senior and middle leaders have ensured that the outcomes in the pupils' education, health and care plans are now integral in the pupils' learning and development. The governing body has greatly increased their level of challenge to school leaders to ensure that the school is improving. The local authority has also provided good support to improve leadership at the school. As a result, the school is improving quickly.

Leaders have established a culture where the outcomes in the pupils' education, health and care plans, or statements of special educational needs, are at the heart of teaching and learning. The outcomes are communicated to all staff to ensure that everyone is aware of what they are trying to achieve for each pupil. Teachers set short-term targets to help pupils achieve the outcomes. These targets are reviewed regularly. Middle leaders check that targets have been reviewed and new ones written. However, I have asked the middle leaders to check more closely the progress pupils are making to reach their targets, to ensure that the new targets are appropriately challenging. Nonetheless, school assessments show that pupils are now making better progress from their starting points across the school.

The middle leaders are enthusiastic and have made a good start in their new roles. They have ensured a consistency of approach to assessments in their key stages to ensure that teachers' judgements are more accurate. They have checked that the agreed whole-school approaches to the planning of the curriculum are being implemented within their key stage. They regularly discuss with staff how the teachers' planning will help pupils achieve their learning targets. As a result, teaching is more focused and pupils are making better progress.

At the previous monitoring visit, I asked you to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work. You have greatly increased the amount of internal and external moderation to check the accuracy of the teachers' judgements, particularly for literacy and numeracy assessments. The middle leaders have supported teachers well to make informed judgements. They have emphasised to teachers the importance of having evidence to support their judgements. In school, teachers are more confident to discuss their assessments of pupils and are open to challenge about their judgements. At the school's latest moderation meeting with other schools, the vast majority of the teachers' assessments were judged to be accurate by staff from the other schools. Leaders are now more confident about the teachers' judgements in literacy and numeracy, and have planned that the next moderation meetings focus on different areas of the curriculum.

The school has reviewed all the targets for pupils looked after in their personal education plans. The targets support the pupils' social and emotional development as well as their academic performance, and are linked to the outcomes in the pupils' education, health and care plans. Leaders have challenged staff to ensure that the targets are specific and measurable. Consequently, the targets are more appropriate and are meeting the pupils' needs. Specific provision has been brokered for pupils, which has had a positive impact on their progress. The designated leader for pupils looked after has now fulfilled her duty to report on the progress of this group of pupils to the governing body.

The new chair of the governing body has shown good leadership in greatly increasing the level of challenge provided by the governors. Minutes of governing body meetings reflect the increased challenge to senior leaders about the improvements the school is making. The governing body has asked senior leaders to attend meetings and has held them to account for their areas of responsibility. They have also challenged senior leaders about how they are going to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching.

All governors have areas of responsibility following the external review of governance to ensure that the necessary actions are completed. Governors visit the school regularly to conduct focused visits, for example learning how teachers assess pupils' work and how leaders are checking that the assessments are accurate. The governing body has ensured that the performance management of the headteacher has now been completed.

External support

The local authority has provided good support following the previous monitoring visit and, as a result, the school is performing much better. The link adviser has supported the recruitment of new governors, including the chair of the governing body, to increase the skill set of the governing body. As a result, the governing body is now supporting and challenging leaders well. The link adviser also supported the governors to set targets for the headteacher's performance. Advisers have worked with two assistant headteachers to strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The advisers have also monitored the quality of teaching, alongside the headteacher, to check that it 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 Leicester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch
Her Majesty's Inspector