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Mr Neil McDonough and Miss Rhiannon Price
Co-headteachers
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Dear Mr McDonough and Miss Price

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ore Village Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 April 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust 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's leaders should take further action to:

- improve attendance and reduce rates of persistent absence even more
- report accurately pupils' performance in public documents such as those available on the website
- base judgements about the school's performance more closely on carefully analysed and precise information such as the outcomes of assessment.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the co-headteachers, other leaders, the chair of the local governing body, the local director of the multi-academy trust, and a group of pupils to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. You led me on two tours of the school and we visited every class. I reviewed leaders' evaluation of the school's own performance, information about current pupils' progress and the school's current action plan. I examined in detail information relating to safeguarding matters, including the school's register of checks on adults working or volunteering at the school. I looked at a range of documents relating to your efforts to improve attendance and concerns or complaints expressed by parents.

Context

Since the last inspection, the deputy headteacher, who was also the special educational needs coordinator and designated safeguarding leader, has resigned. A new deputy headteacher was appointed from the staff. The school business manager has also left but is due to be replaced. In September 2016, there was a change of leadership in the early years too. The number of pupils on roll has reduced by about 10%. The two co-headteachers are coming to the end of a fixed period of engagement. A new headteacher and associate headteacher have been appointed to take up their posts in September 2017.

Main findings

Together, you have brought stability to the leadership of Ore Village Primary Academy. You have made necessary changes to other aspects of the staffing so that in the current academic year the team has been strengthened. As soon as you arrived, you set about improving the quality of teaching in all areas of the school. In order to make this possible, you also overhauled the policies, practices and procedures for managing pupils' behaviour. This was because too much learning was disrupted, attendance was too low and some pupils exhibited extreme behaviour too often.

You set clear expectations for each of these aspects of the school's work. You put in place a training programme and weekly activities aimed at developing the staff's skills. You also undertook a thorough review of how well each pupil was doing. This process of checking continues so that you have a clear understanding now of the relative performance of every pupil. You showed me convincing evidence of the progress pupils are currently making and we agreed that outcomes are, therefore, improving over time. We also agreed that generally pupils at Ore Village have lower starting points than is typical nationally. You recognise that all pupils need to make even faster progress than others if they are to achieve important benchmarks for their age.

Pupils attained well in the phonics screening check in Year 1 in 2016. This is because the teaching of phonics is undertaken with passion, determination and skill. Children currently in the early years are similarly getting a good start to learning overall, because the adults focus intently and systematically on what each child needs to fill gaps in their knowledge, skills or understanding. The outside learning space has been improved since the last inspection so that it now provides an effective learning environment which reflects the layout and organisation of the classroom spaces. You showed me a similar space which has been created for Year 1 so that pupils' transition into key stage 1 is likely to be smoother.

In the most recent round of published results for summer 2016, pupils in key stage 2 did less well than the school expected. Far too many pupils failed to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You acknowledge this and showed me all the changes you have made to support, in particular, the current Year 6 pupils. Your determination that all pupils will be ready for secondary school is clear in the extra tuition and support for their writing that has been put in place now that pupils have completed their end-of-key-stage-2 tests. In key stage 1, strenuous efforts are being made to improve pupils' reading. Most pupils enjoy listening to reading and practise their own reading when they can. Some are not yet able to use their phonics skills carefully to support their reading of tricky texts. You have revamped the library areas so that they are now attractive places for pupils to go and read.

Leaders have made similar efforts to tackle stubbornly high levels of persistent absence. Attendance overall remains weak despite the extensive range of strategies you have put in place to improve it. The proportion of sessions missed has not reduced in the current year, as shown in the information you provided me. However, the number of pupils who are persistently absent is falling. You are building productive relationships with parents to enable robust conversations about their children's attendance. Most importantly, you are focused on making school even more interesting, exciting and engaging so that pupils are keen themselves not to miss sessions. Pupils told me about some fun and inspiring activities which have helped them appreciate the joy of learning. Pupils also told me that, under your leadership, any poor behaviour, including bullying, is dealt with so that they can get on with their work. They like this.

You have developed sensible plans for addressing the areas requiring improvement at the last inspection. Improvements to teaching and learning are well underway. Improvements to the quality of middle-level leadership and management are similarly making a difference. Teachers are much more confident about using information about what pupils know, understand and can do to tailor lessons accordingly. Teachers are much better equipped to identify pupils at risk of falling behind. More pupils have been assessed with actual barriers to their learning than was the case in the past. You have also ensured that staff take account of these needs in their planning. As a result, pupils are making better progress than in the past and are beginning to catch up with other pupils with similar starting points

nationally.

External support

Notably, you have sought and received support from a wide range of external providers. East Sussex behaviour and attendance service are working closely with you on reducing pupils' absence and with those who exhibit more extreme behaviour. East Sussex local authority clearly provided reasonable challenge about the outcomes in the early years in 2016. Advisers rightly checked the quality of learning at the end of Reception and also the baselines for the children starting in September 2016. This was undertaken in partnership with a specialist from the Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT). TKAT also provides support at regional level from an experienced headteacher, one of whose functions is to check the school's progress towards being judged good at the next section 5 inspection. You have received support for your work to evaluate the school's performance. While we agreed that you know the school's strengths and weaknesses well, the way in which they are recorded and reported are not always accurate or reliable enough. There is a lack of precision, for example, in the way results are published on the website. You draw on expertise held in TKAT centrally, where useful, to secure personnel decisions or, for example, to improve assessment practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector