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Mark Westmoreland
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Dear Mr Westmoreland

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Water Leys Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 July 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 you and senior leaders, leaders responsible for English, mathematics, key stage 2, and the early years, and with members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with a representative of the local authority. I toured classrooms, observing the pupils working, talking to them about their work and looking at examples of what they have produced. I met with a group of pupils. I looked at a sample of the pupils' workbooks. I scrutinised a range of documents, including safeguarding records.

Context

You have made several changes to leadership responsibilities. Some of the leaders with whom I met took up their responsibilities after the inspection in July 2016. The current academic year is the first in which the school has had pupils in Year 6.

Main findings

You and the senior leaders have taken the opportunity provided by the inspection in July 2016 to invest the school with a renewed sense of purpose and direction. You have set about making necessary improvements systematically. The time that you have given for training and development among the whole staff is paying dividends. Your actions are leading to coherent and consistent approaches to meeting the learning needs of the pupils in all phases of the school because the staff are increasingly understanding the reasons for, and seeing the benefits of, the changes that you are making.

You have improved the ways in which the pupils' learning is assessed. You are analysing the information from the assessments much more rigorously than before and acting upon what you find out. That approach is bringing improvements in the teaching of mathematics and writing.

The discussions that take place between the leaders and the staff are better informed than previously, as a result of the changes in assessment. The staff are now able to account for the pupils' learning, and your discussions with them result in changes in teaching and support for the pupils. The leaders follow up the actions that are agreed during the discussions, to check that improvements have been made.

The subject leaders have benefited from a broad range of support, training and development opportunities. They have been able, as a result, to improve their skills and knowledge. Accordingly, they are operating more effectively now as leaders than was the case at the time of the last inspection. You provided me with examples of the changes that you have made; for instance, extending the best practice at the school evident in key stage 1, for example in how the pupils' learning is assessed, into the other key stages.

The governing body has also taken action to improve the skills of its members. After the inspection, it commissioned an external review of governance, even though it was not required to do so. That review involved identifying skills that the members needed to develop. As a result, the governing body has been able to obtain appropriate training and to put in place more effective ways of working. The school's leaders are aware of a consequent increase in the level of scrutiny and challenge from the governing body. The external review of the school's use of the pupil premium, which was called for by the last inspection, was carried out reasonably promptly. The school is now acting on the findings and

recommendations.

By focusing on how the pupils' learning is assessed, you have raised the staff's expectations of what the pupils can and should achieve. The pupils with whom I spoke told me emphatically that the school is better now than it was at the time of the last inspection. They were able to talk fluently about a range of things that the school has done, from introducing 'challenge pegs' in the early years, to how support has been given to them individually in Year 6. Pupils with a range of learning needs and levels of ability explained to me how the work that they are being given is both stimulating and challenging. I saw examples of that in what they were doing in lessons and what they had done in their workbooks.

You have increased significantly the emphasis given to improving the pupils' writing; it is, as you described it to me, 'in your face'. I saw plenty of examples of good-quality, carefully produced writing and evidence of secure progress by children and pupils from the early years through to Year 6, including among boys.

The early years leader has been provided with a variety of suitable opportunities to develop her skills. She has used these opportunities to good effect. For example, the support with which she has been provided has enabled her to introduce a better way of establishing the children's learning needs when they start at the school. As a result, the children are being given learning tasks aligned more closely than before with their individual needs.

External support

The package of support for the school arranged by the local authority, including through links with other schools, is helping the school to make the necessary improvements. The school has used the support effectively and the leaders are now actively seeking out other appropriate opportunities.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss
Her Majesty's Inspector