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David Cates
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cates

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Riddings Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 19 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:

- refine the information gathered about pupils' strengths and weaknesses as they join the school by developing transition work with feeder infant schools.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders of mathematics and English, and members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone. The school's improvement plans were evaluated. I visited all classrooms with you and the deputy headteacher, and together we evaluated the quality of teaching and the impact of leaders' work in improving it. I also examined some workbooks from the most able group.

Context

The school is undergoing major refurbishment and extension.

Main findings

You and the deputy headteacher have been swift to tackle the areas of weakness identified at the previous visit. You are now firmly focused on the areas for improvement from the last inspection. A systematic approach to planning and focused action have led to demonstrable improvements, especially in the quality of teaching. Both of you have ensured that messages to staff have been communicated with the utmost clarity. You have ensured that teachers' expectations, especially in relation to the most able pupils, have been raised. As a result, these pupils are working with increased complexity and sophistication in both English and mathematics. In these subjects, all pupils work diligently. Their motivation and enthusiasm for mathematics, reading and writing is unmistakable.

Whole-school and subject plans for improvement now contain the clarity necessary to move the school forward. Subject leaders have improved their effectiveness by using good practice from elsewhere to improve teaching. Their knowledge and expertise are valued across the school. The teaching of English and mathematics has improved as a result of the guidance and support they are providing for other staff. A systematic approach to the teaching of reasoning skills in mathematics is making a positive difference to pupils' thinking skills. Pupils' writing skills, including the quality of their handwriting and presentation, are markedly better than previously. The deputy headteacher, who is in charge of teaching and learning, has overseen the development of the subject leaders very well.

Leaders are improving their assessment practices. Pre- and post-assessment tasks in mathematics, for example, are ensuring that gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are tackled far earlier than previously. Leaders have sharpened up the assessment criteria for key subjects and, as a result, there is greater consistency in teaching practice throughout the school. Leaders are refining their approaches to encouraging pupils to work at greater depth as their knowledge of the assessment framework strengthens. Leaders have not yet established the precise strengths and weaknesses in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills

when they join the school from feeder infant schools. You recognise that further work is now needed to accelerate pupils' progress even more.

The governing body has continued to refine and improve its effectiveness. It has developed a more effective approach to monitoring the work of the school. Governors' visits to the school have increased their knowledge and understanding of leaders' work. They challenge you and other leaders regularly.

External support

You are making good use of support from the schools within the teaching school alliance to standardise assessments and share good practice. You continue to gain useful support and guidance from the local authority. The quality and range of school-to-school support have increased.

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

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector