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Miss Elizabeth Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Smith

Requires improvement: second monitoring inspection visit to Imperial Avenue Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 6 June 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 and section 8 inspections.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The first monitoring inspection took place in March 2016. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in June 2015, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders, governors and the local authority are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the section 5 inspection and the section 8 monitoring inspection, in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- revise its planning to guide the next stage of the school's improvement by focusing on the key actions that will have the greatest impact on pupils' progress
- ensure that governors' challenges to leaders are precisely and relentlessly focused on the impact of the actions taken to improve the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last monitoring inspection. I also spoke with the headteacher of the local partner school, Parks Primary School. I evaluated the school's improvement planning, pupils' performance information and information on pupils' attendance. With the headteacher, I reviewed a sample of the work of disadvantaged pupils, including those who are the most able.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the previous headteacher has left the school. One member of the early years team has retired. Two deputy headteachers have taken up their posts.

The local authority organised an informal partnership arrangement with a local school, Parks Primary School. From May 2016 until January 2017, the headteacher of this partner school provided intensive leadership support in the role of executive headteacher. The deputy headteacher of the partner school took on the head of school role at Imperial Avenue from January 2017. She was appointed as the substantive headteacher in April 2017.

Main findings

There has been considerable improvement since the previous monitoring visit. The governing body, local authority and senior leaders from a local primary school have acted quickly to tackle the areas identified for improvement. A clear staffing and leadership structure is in place. The school's planning for improvement is more effective.

The partnership arrangement with leaders from Parks Primary School, brokered by the local authority, has been highly effective. The interim leadership of the executive headteacher has had considerable impact. She has managed a great deal of meaningful change in a short period of time, while ensuring that staff and parents maintain their support. Her leadership has made a real difference.

A substantive headteacher is now in post. This senior leader knows the school well. She is passionate in her commitment to ensure that the school becomes a good school, with all pupils achieving highly and making at least good progress. She is committed to all pupils feeling safe and happy, with high levels of attendance. She has considerable skills, particularly in teaching, learning and assessment, and is rapidly developing the leadership skills required of her new role.

The school partnership arrangement has also provided valuable input beyond senior leadership. Staff have received high-quality training and professional development.

Teachers have worked with lead practitioners from outside their school. They have planned pupils' learning together and jointly delivered lessons. A new focus on 'what pupils are learning', not 'what pupils are doing', has built up. Partnership working also means that teachers' assessment of pupils' work is much more accurate.

Leaders undertake regular checks in lessons and of pupils' books to make sure that pupils are making the progress of which they are capable. They provide teachers with useful advice, tips or practical help as a result of these checks. This has resulted in rapid improvement in the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make in their lessons.

Leaders now manage teachers' performance effectively. All staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Teachers are clear about their targets and the support that they will receive to achieve these. They are clear about how their own performance contributes to improving the school.

The school's planning for improvement has improved. The current plans reflect the extensive actions that leaders have taken since the previous monitoring inspection. These plans, however, are too long. They do not focus sufficiently on the critical actions that will make the greatest difference for pupils and accelerate their progress. Leaders recognise that the school's planning is not yet fully supporting the next stage in the school's journey to becoming a good school.

The chair and vice-chair of the governing body have worked with great commitment, often under difficult circumstances, to tackle the issues identified at the previous inspection. Governors have sharpened their ways of working and are now more rigorously holding leaders to account. They have the appropriate skills and a realistic understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas that need to develop further. They are aware of the importance of maintaining the rapid pace of improvement and the precise nature of governance that is required to ensure that the school becomes a good school.

External support

The local authority's support for the school has been effective. Its officers have brokered appropriate resources, including a local school partnership and an executive headteacher. The quality of advisory support is good.

The informal partnership with Parks Primary School is highly effective. True commitment is evident among all involved and its impact has been extensive. A mentor is in place to provide professional development and advice to the headteacher.

Plans are in place to ensure continued partnership working with the other local schools. This improvement group includes the linked junior school.

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

Jayne Ashman
Her Majesty's Inspector