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Mrs Sue Hounslow
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Dear Mrs Hounslow

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Eaton Bray Academy

Following my visit to your school on 19 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 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that, in addition to sampling pupils' work and checking assessment information, all leaders confirm their findings by observing teaching and learning in classes
- sustain and embed the recent new ways of working and approaches to teaching and learning in reading and mathematics
- ensure that books in classrooms and in the library are displayed in ways that invite pupils to read them, encourage pupils to look after them and support the school's drive to promote reading

- evaluate the quality of outdoor provision for Reception-aged children to ensure that all of the areas of learning are accessible through outdoor play.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher responsible for inclusion and subject leaders of English, mathematics, science and computing, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's development plan and action plan were evaluated. I examined the school's most recent information about pupils' learning. You joined me on a learning walk that included all classrooms and I looked at a small sample of pupils' work in English and mathematics.

Context

Since the last inspection leadership within the school has been restructured. The leaders of English and mathematics have been appointed as assistant headteachers from 1 September 2017. Pupils in the Nursery are now taught by a qualified teacher as well as early years staff. Three new governors have been appointed to start in September 2017. The school is being supported by a headteacher through Luton's teaching alliance.

Main findings

Leaders and governors are united in their ambition and determination to raise pupils' academic achievement. They are equally committed to sustain good-quality care, guidance, support and welfare, which parents appreciate. The new leadership structure clarifies each leader's role and includes clear lines of accountability. Each staff member knows to whom they are answerable. You have raised expectations among all staff for the amount of progress that pupils make. This is beginning to make a difference. The assessment information that you and other leaders examine regularly shows that pupils are now making better progress. Even so, this is currently uneven across subjects, year groups and key stages.

You have introduced a new system to appraise teachers' and teaching assistants' performance annually and you have rightly set them targets to aim for that are linked to pupils' achievement. These actions are changing the culture among staff. Staff realise that pupils are capable of more academically and they are beginning to challenge them more through their teaching. The sea-change that you and other senior leaders have created is generating a professional dialogue among leaders, teachers and teaching assistants that is focused on raising pupils' academic achievement. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection. Previously, leadership was not effective in holding staff accountable for pupils' achievement. The progress that pupils were making and their attainment did not reflect their abilities. This is improving discernibly.

You, and other leaders, are monitoring the quality of teaching and learning regularly and with increasing rigour and accuracy. The deputy headteacher has made changes in staffing in the Nursery. She has raised the bar for what the school expects in terms of children's progress. The early years was a strength in the previous inspection but during our learning walk we both observed that provision for outdoor play in Reception does not match the quality seen in the Nursery.

In the previous inspection, inspectors found that, particularly in reading and mathematics, expectations were not high enough for what pupils could achieve. The subject leaders in English and mathematics are making the necessary improvements. A whole-school 'reading revolution' has been introduced targeting, in particular, boys' engagement with reading – which was an issue at the time of the last inspection. Incentives for boys to earn rewards for reading regularly are making a difference. Boys are reading much more regularly and have re-engaged with this key skill. Disappointingly, books in most classes and in the library, although plentiful, are not being displayed well enough so that pupils are immediately attracted to them. Work seen in pupils' books, on display and when we dropped into classes provided secure evidence that reasoning and problem solving in mathematics is a regular feature in the curriculum. The most able pupils are being stretched.

Teachers are providing pupils with better feedback about their learning so that they know how to improve. This is not being checked well enough over time to ensure that learning points are sustained. While leaders of English and mathematics have given staff clear guidelines on how to make changes in their practice and have checked that teachers can provide evidence of this in terms of pupils' outcomes, they have not had enough opportunities to observe teaching at first hand. Lead teachers for computing and science have devised ways to track pupils' progress. They too have not had enough opportunities to observe teaching at the point of delivery to substantiate their judgements unequivocally.

Governance has improved since the previous inspection. Governors have carried out an audit of the range of skills that governors can offer to move the school forward. New governors have been appointed with this in mind. Governors have become more challenging in holding you and other leaders to account. They have ensured that this is reflected in the minutes of their meetings. They are diligent in monitoring the progress that disadvantaged pupils are making to ensure that the pupil premium is well spent. Governors are receiving regular information about how well different groups of pupils are doing, and if groups are not performing well they ask why.

Overall, the school is clearly focused on making the necessary changes to move forward and regain its status as a good school. The school's development plan and action plan are both fit for purpose and clearly focused on raising achievement. Actions are implemented consistently and checked at regular intervals to see where

there is secure evidence of improvement. The school is unlikely to receive a further monitoring inspection before the next section 5 inspection.

External support

You have ensured that an independent view of how well the school is performing is achieved by commissioning support from Luton's teaching alliance. This is helping you to know that the actions you are taking to move the school forward are having an impact. You appreciate the level of challenge you receive and the targets that are set for you to make adjustments at each visit.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector