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Cari Burgess
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Dear Mrs Burgess

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Henry Whipple Primary School

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 January 2017. 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:

- coordinate the school's action plans and development plans so that leaders and governors can use them efficiently to check on the improvements that are being made.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the leaders for English, mathematics and the early years. The inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. The inspector met with parents as they

brought their children to school and visited every class with you to see the learning that was taking place. She scrutinised a range of documentation, including reports from the local authority, and the school's action plans, self-evaluation document and the single central record. The inspector spoke with a group of pupils. She examined a range of books from every class alongside you, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher.

Context

Since the last inspection, two teachers have had some absence due to ill health and their classes have been taught by alternative teachers, including supply teachers and the deputy headteacher. Three teachers have resigned and will be leaving at the end of August. Three new teachers have been appointed to start in September 2017.

Main findings

Following the last inspection, you, supported by the governing body, wasted no time in restructuring the school's leadership team. The roles and responsibilities of the middle and senior leadership teams are now much clearer. The senior leadership team drew up an action plan to tackle the areas for improvement raised at the last inspection. Governors' scrutiny of the plan led to changes, such as the inclusion of clear milestones by which leaders could be held to account. The action plan, however, is not as informative or helpful as the school's annual development plan. It does not provide all the information leaders and governors need to check how well the school is doing.

You have been outward looking in your quest for school improvement. Immediately following the inspection in January, you undertook a comprehensive check on the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and put in place the appropriate support for teachers where it was needed. You identified sharply where effective practice in the school could be more consistently applied and where a fresh look at policies and approaches to teaching was needed. Supported by the other members of the leadership team, you have continued this approach, checking regularly on the quality of teaching and learning and providing teachers with information and support to ensure that they continue to improve their practice.

You have made effective use of links with the Transform Teaching School Alliance and a local specialist leader of education. Teachers have visited other schools locally to learn from best practice, enabling them to become more accurate in their assessments of what pupils understand and can do. This has helped teachers to provide work for pupils that is well matched to their ability. Pupils told the inspector that the work was just right for them. One said, 'It's a challenge. I like a challenge. If it's too easy, you're not going to learn.' Another pupil, having been set a mathematical investigation, exclaimed, 'This is exciting!' He further explained to the inspector that 'I enjoy the challenge.'

Leaders have introduced new approaches to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school. Collectively, through examining and discussing samples of pupils' work in all year groups, teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve. Visits to lessons and a scrutiny of pupils' books showed that, apart from on very rare occasions, teachers are following the new teaching methods consistently. This is paying dividends, with most pupils making at least the progress you expect them to make from their starting points.

The leaders for English and mathematics have begun to take far more responsibility for pupils' achievement. They have started to lead the termly meetings with teachers to discuss the progress that their pupils are making. These meetings now focus closely on the progress that pupils make over an extended period of time rather than just in recent weeks. Following the meetings, subject leaders check to ensure that teachers have a clear plan for providing the appropriate support so that pupils do not fall behind. You have, wisely, kept an overview of these meetings so that she can hold the subject leaders to account with rigour.

Pupils' books show that teachers follow the school's marking policy closely. Pupils say they understand the feedback they receive from their teachers and that it helps them to improve their work.

The deputy headteacher has worked closely with the attendance officer from the Transform Teaching School Alliance. She analyses pupils' attendance every three weeks and alerts the attendance officer if there is a concern. He then works with parents to help them understand the importance of their children attending school every day. A recent meeting with parents of children in the early years highlighted the importance of good attendance at this early stage in a child's school life. Current information shows that levels of attendance are higher than at the same time last year and the levels of persistent absence are lower.

Leaders have long since provided parents with opportunities to come into school. Nevertheless, shortly after the last inspection, leaders redoubled their efforts to engage parents in their children's learning. You surveyed parents' views to find out when they would prefer to come into school, and the sorts of topics they would like the school to focus on. Since then, 'learning together' events have included information about national assessments in Year 2 and Year 6, helping children with reading and writing, and a fathers' day event. Leaders value the feedback that parents give following these events and are using the information to shape future sessions. The vast majority of parents who spoke with the inspector agreed that communication from the school is good.

Like her colleagues, the early years leader has benefited from visiting other settings to see good practice. She has ensured that teachers plan outdoor learning activities much more closely. On the day of the monitoring visit, writing and mathematics activities were placed side by side with water, sand and imaginative exploration. You recognise that it is important to ensure that children are challenged to think

hard and encouraged to be independent in their outdoor learning.

Governors know the school well. They offered you their full support as you restructured the leadership team. Following the last inspection, governors undertook training to help them understand the school's assessment information in the context of the national picture. Governors have begun to undertake more focused visits to school. They work alongside leaders to help them gain a fuller understanding of the improvements that are being made and the difference this is making to how well pupils achieve. Governors understand the governing body's role in holding leaders to account as well as supporting leaders in the work they do.

External support

The local authority has provided the school with some useful support. For example, an adviser has supported teachers to improve their skills and accuracy in assessing pupils' work. A consultant for mathematics from the local authority has provided useful training and support to leaders in checking the quality of teaching. A large proportion of the support that the school has benefited from, such as visiting different schools and support from the specialist leader of education through the Transform Teaching School Alliance, has been brokered by you.

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

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector