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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Tracy Gannon
Headteacher
Abercrombie Primary School
Higher Albert Street
Chesterfield
Derbyshire
S41 7QE

Dear Mrs Gannon

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Abercrombie Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 September 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 February 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 recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- provide the English and mathematics subject leaders with dedicated time to check and monitor the quality of teaching in their subject areas
- enable these subject leaders to meet with senior leaders in order to drive and secure further improvements to provision and outcomes.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, three members of the governing body and a group of pupils. I held a telephone

conversation with a representative of the local authority. I considered a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, the latest self-evaluation document, your most recent information on pupils' progress and attainment, and documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils. We conducted a tour of the school together and visited all classes to see pupils and staff at work. I spoke with several parents at the beginning of the school day.

Context

Since the previous section 5 inspection, one new teacher has joined the school.

Main findings

The school improvement plan is sharply focused on those areas most in need of improvement. It is providing you and other senior leaders with a clear strategic overview about actions needed to bring about change. It identifies measurable success criteria and specific dates for actions to be completed. These are helping governors to check progress regularly and provide greater challenge. As a result, improvements are taking place at a steady pace.

You and other senior leaders are working effectively with all staff to raise your expectations of what pupils should achieve, particularly the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils. There are now higher expectations of the quality of teaching and more rigorous procedures to manage teachers' performance.

Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress have been reviewed and are more robust. Assessment is becoming more accurate and detailed through the use of agreed criteria, regular marking and pupil response time, moderation and effective training for all staff. All teachers are using this information more confidently to plan work that is better matched to the learning needs of pupils. This is confirmed by pupils, who say that they are expected to work harder during lessons and activities are now more challenging. You keep a close eye on any pupils who are at risk of falling behind and ensure that the right support is put in place. As a result, outcomes are improving.

Since the inspection in February 2017, teachers have received a range of training and support to improve their practice. This is ongoing. Teachers are setting high expectations and their planning matches information about what precisely pupils need to do to improve. As a result, pupils are engaged in purposeful and productive learning. For example, mathematics lessons are providing pupils with different levels of challenge. There are also more opportunities for them to develop mathematical reasoning through problem solving and explaining the strategies they have used.

Pupils' current workbooks, at this very early stage of the new academic year, do not contain sufficient work to undertake a reliable work analysis. However, a sample of workbooks retained from the previous academic year shows that most pupils are

making the progress they need to in order to reach the standards expected for their age. For example, at key stage 2, pupils' books show that they are developing their ability to write creatively at length in a variety of ways using a range of engaging stimuli. They use a range of grammar and punctuation confidently, and handwriting is extremely neat and tidy.

You are beginning to build a strong team of middle leaders who ably take responsibility for learning and progress in their subjects, particularly in English and mathematics. They are developing a better understanding of their roles and accountability, and the pace of improvement across the school is accelerating. However, we agreed that they do not always have sufficient planned time to observe staff teach, model best practice, identify targets for improvement and meet with senior leaders.

The governing body has acted swiftly to implement the recommendations following the review of governance. Governors are developing a clearer understanding of their role and are more informed about the work of the school. Consequently, they are contributing effectively to the improvements being made. For example, they now have a clearer understanding of the impact of how the school is spending additional funding. They can now better hold leaders to account.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements. Pupils with whom I spoke told me they felt happy and safe in school.

In every lesson we visited, attitudes to learning were positive and pupils were well engaged in their work. The behaviour of the pupils seen was consistently good.

External support

The local authority is providing effective support for the school. For example, links have been brokered with other local schools to help share ideas and examples of good practice. You welcome the regular visits of the associate link adviser to check on progress and to challenge you on the impact of your leadership.

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

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector