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Zaheer Mohamed
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mohamed

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Linden Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 October 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 recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that leaders' plans for curricular improvements and progression are consistent across all subjects, classes and year groups
- implement recommendations from the recent external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, some of your middle leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. We conducted a tour of the school to look at learning. I evaluated a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, the latest self-evaluation of the school's performance, school assessment information and attendance information. I considered the report from an external review of the use of pupil premium funding. I evaluated the school's arrangements for safeguarding. I looked at a sample of pupils' work.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, staffing has remained consistent. A new leader for the early years has been appointed internally.

Main findings

Your drive and ambition for the school is clear. You are well supported by the governing body, which shares your vision to support pupils to achieve their best. You have taken swift and effective action to improve the areas for development identified at the last inspection.

Your action plans for the school are sharply focused on what the school needs to do to improve. You have shared your plans with the governing body. The governors explained to me that the plans helped to set the agenda for their monitoring visits so that they had a clear focus linked to school improvement. Leaders also spoke of how the school's action plans enable them to lead effectively, giving clear and precise information to help them to do their job. They regularly monitor and work with other leaders to evaluate and review the success of their actions.

You have improved the quality of teaching and learning in the early years. The appointment of a new leader, who is also the teacher for the Reception class, has been effective. Children in the early years now benefit from better provision. Specific training and specialist support have ensured that teaching, learning and assessment for children in the Reception class are rapidly improving. The leader and teaching assistants work closely together to provide a language-rich environment for children. Interesting experiences challenge children effectively. For example, children are encouraged not only to enjoy playing with sand but also to copy animal tracks so that they are learning to create patterns in a fun and meaningful way.

Leaders at all levels rigorously check the impact of their actions on improving provision and standards for pupils. This has been made possible because of the effective assessment system you have introduced. Your assessment leader explained that teachers regularly update pupils' assessment information on the assessment database. You and other leaders monitor and analyse this information

on a regular basis. You carefully track all pupils, especially pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

You have made improvements to teaching and learning by reviewing the learning of mathematics. Specific staff training and a review of teachers' planning by the leader of mathematics have ensured that all pupils are developing their reasoning skills. Pupils now benefit from more opportunities to use reasoning to deepen their knowledge and understanding in mathematics. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. As a result, the most able pupils are well challenged and can confidently explain their mathematical strategies.

Leaders have raised pupils' expectations of what they can achieve through providing more challenging opportunities. As a result, all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, have a positive and enthusiastic attitude to challenge. The pupils I spoke with discussed how much they like to be challenged. One pupil explained, 'We get challenged in a good way; it's hard but exciting, so I enjoy it.' Another pupil commented, 'Things have changed. I find mathematics hard and used to get different work to everyone else. That made me sad. Now I get to do the same work as everyone else but the teachers support me really well and explain it clearly for me. I find it a challenge but I'm managing to do it and I'm so proud of myself!' In addition, the inclusion leader is more rigorously monitoring personalised targets for pupils who have additional needs to ensure that teachers are held accountable for the progress they make.

School leaders have improved pupils' attendance. Leaders appointed an attendance officer after the previous inspection. As a result, pupils' attendance, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is rigorously monitored.

You commissioned an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding, as requested by Ofsted. The review was delayed for reasons you fully explained to me. You have recently received the report of this review. The review is thorough and gives you clear and effective advice. School leaders, including governors, are aware of the findings in the report. They have a good understanding of the next steps needed in order to fully implement the recommendations.

You have accessed high-quality training and support to train teachers better to improve the teaching and learning of writing across the school. This training, including teachers' participation in research projects, is ongoing. Teachers now insist that pupils apply their knowledge of grammar and punctuation to improve their writing. However, this is not yet consistently as effective as it could be in all classes. You are aware that the English leader's plans for further improvements are not as precise as they should be.

Following my scrutiny of pupils' work, you and I agreed that there have been significant improvements in the quality of learning in English and mathematics.

However, you acknowledge that the same good progression is not yet consistently evidenced in other subjects across the curriculum.

External support

The school receives support from the local authority and from Evington Valley Primary School. Leaders, including governors, find this support helpful. They acknowledge that this external support is contributing to your successes in tackling the areas for improvement that were identified at the last section 5 inspection.

The local authority school improvement adviser has supported the school with improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. She has provided effective training and advice to the governing body and brokered specialist support for middle leaders. There is now a new school improvement adviser from the local authority working with the school. The previous adviser has left to take up a new position. The advisers agree that the school is taking effective action to improve but some changes have not yet had time to become fully effective.

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

Stephanie Innes-Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector