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Karen Price
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Dear Miss Price

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Zaytouna Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 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 February 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in December 2014, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- the external review of governance is concluded as quickly as possible, and by the end of November 2017 at the latest
- the school's action plan includes clear targets of pupils' progress for all year groups
- teachers plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to be able to plan, predict and evaluate open-ended scientific investigations.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the leader of the core curriculum, leaders of key stages 1 and 2, and the teacher of the early years. I also held a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the leaders' improvement planning and undertook an extensive scrutiny of pupils' work. I also met with a large group of pupils, and toured the school with you to see lessons taking place in all year groups. I checked that the school's records of safeguarding checks met requirements.

Context

The deputy headteacher was appointed as headteacher from May 2017. There are three new members of the governing body, including the previous headteacher.

Main findings

Senior leaders have taken brisk action to address the key aspects identified for improvement at the last inspection. You and the governing body have written a clear action plan that sets out sensible actions to address all areas, along with logical timescales and arrangements for who will check these have taken place. However, this would benefit from precise targets for the achievement of different year groups. This will assist governors to see precisely how effective these actions are on raising pupils' outcomes across all key stages.

Senior leaders and all members of staff are making it clear to parents the need for their children to attend regularly, unless there are exceptional reasons. Leaders do not authorise holidays in term time, and school newsletters, the website and displays in corridors give clear messages that unnecessary absence hampers pupils' progress. At the same time, staff use a series of high-profile strategies to celebrate pupils who attend well and reward them with certificates. Because of a concerted drive by staff to reduce absence across the school, pupils' attendance has risen considerably. It is now approaching the national average, and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has halved. Leaders are working hard to ensure that they work closely with the remaining families whose children do not yet attend regularly, so that these pupils' absence will also decrease over time.

The review of the governing body has not yet taken place, although it is imminent. As identification of the right person to undertake the review has taken longer than expected, governors wasted no time in conducting an audit of their own skills in the interim. This showed that in all areas of their responsibility, at least one governor has at least a basic level of understanding and experience. However, the audit also revealed that, in some areas, the collective skills of the governing body were not sufficiently high. These were in understanding pupils' achievement, teachers'

assessment of their pupils' progress, the curriculum, and the overall legal responsibilities of the governing body. Governors have attended to this by swiftly bringing on to the governing body three new members, all of which have an educational background. One of these members is a headteacher in another school that Ofsted has judged to be good. The contribution of these new members is providing the governors with increased confidence that they are holding leaders to account. However, as the review has not yet taken place, governors cannot be certain that their assessment of their own skills is wholly accurate and complete. You have agreed to send me a copy of the external review of governance as soon as it is finished, along with any adjustments you make to the school's action plan because of the review's findings.

Governors are now receiving better information to help them to understand the gains that different groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged, are making. You have agreed with them an appropriate format in which they want this data presented. It includes information on the support that you are organising to help those pupils who need to catch up.

The teacher for the early years is ensuring that the parents of children in her class are now receiving much more detail about their children's learning. Staff make clear to parents at the start of the year their expectations for children's progress. Staff ensure that they are always present to talk to parents each day about the gains their child is making. Staff are also using an online system of information to show each child's levels of skills in all areas of learning, and have made this available to parents. Parents are uploading on to this system details of the things their children are learning at home. Staff then use the information alongside their own assessments of what each child can do in order to plan activities for children.

Senior leaders are ensuring that leaders for different key stages in the school, who are known as phase leaders, are now playing an increasingly effective role in monitoring, and in raising, the quality of teaching. These leaders have undertaken training themselves, and are supporting colleagues who are less experienced, or less confident, to improve. These leaders are now responsible for analysing the performance data that teachers across their key stage are recording on the school's tracking systems. This is so these leaders can identify year groups where pupils are not making sufficient progress, and pass this information to you. These leaders have also undertaken visits across the school to see learning for themselves, and have scrutinised pupils' work. This is helping them to identify where teaching is strongest, and any year groups where teachers are not yet improving sufficiently, along with the reasons for this.

Teaching is improving. You have made it clear to staff that it is essential that if pupils' attention wanders, they quickly notice and address it. You and your staff have agreed that all lessons will begin promptly, and that the work that pupils are given will be challenging. Pupils will have the resources they need, and staff will celebrate pupils who work hard and concentrate. Because of these new

expectations, almost all classrooms are now well-ordered learning environments. During my visit, we saw teachers quickly challenging any pupils who were not paying full attention, and reminding them of the need to focus on their work. Pupils displayed positive and respectful attitudes to the adults.

Pupils' workbooks show that teachers are now ensuring that pupils get many more opportunities to write for different purposes, including increasing amounts across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 2 have composed questions about the Great Fire of London, asking, for instance, why the city did not have a fire brigade. Teachers in Year 4 are setting work for pupils, for example which requires them to use metaphors to describe the weather, linked to their geography topic. Teachers are also ensuring that they provide better guidance for pupils on how to write for different audiences and purposes. Pupils I met during my visit told me how teachers are now giving them clear prompt sheets that will help them to remember the different features they need to include. Pupils say they find these very helpful. They also explained how teachers' demonstrations on how to compose, review, and improve a piece of writing also assists them to write more accurately themselves. As a result, pupils are able to write a wider range of texts with greater confidence. Teachers are also starting to ensure that pupils receive more regular science teaching. For example, pupils in key stage 1 are using Venn diagrams to show how different animals live in woodland and/or other habitats. However, pupils' workbooks show that, while teachers are improving pupils' scientific knowledge, they are not yet matching this by ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities for open-ended scientific investigations.

Although teachers do not yet consistently plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to undertake real-life mathematical problem solving and reasoning, there are promising signs of this overall. Exercise books show that, in almost all classes, there is greater evidence that teachers are giving pupils word-based problems to solve. On some occasions, pupils challenge themselves to show, for example, whether a statement is true or not. For example, one pupil had asked, 'Any two odd numbers added together make an even number. Can you prove it?' The pupil had responded with a number of careful calculations to show that the statement was always true.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The governing body have sought effective external support by commissioning an adviser from the local authority to assist them to understand pupils' performance data. This, in turn, has helped governors to ask leaders questions that are more effective about pupils' progress from their starting points. Governors say that they have found this support helpful, and are committed to brokering further support from the local authority, or other external agencies, in the future, as needed. In addition, teachers in different classes have received support from colleagues in

other schools, joining, for example, a teachers' cluster group for mathematics. The headteacher has also visited an outstanding school to see best teaching practice for herself.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector