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Mrs A H-Chapman
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Dear Mrs H-Chapman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ark Ayrton Primary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 20 November 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the multi-academy trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good academy.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the governing body, the executive headteacher and a representative from the multi-academy trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I visited classrooms with senior leaders and spoke to a group of teachers. I met with pupils and considered a range of the school's documents, including the outcomes of monitoring activities and the impact of performance management.

Context

A number of changes have occurred since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher was appointed as headteacher, following the retirement of the previous post holder. Consequently, a new deputy headteacher has been appointed. The multi-academy trust has also appointed an executive headteacher, taking overall responsibility for this school and another local primary school. There is now a new local governing body with oversight of both schools.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, senior leaders have acted quickly to address the areas identified for improvement. Action plans are effective because they are straightforward and closely monitored. Leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching. Their hands-on, supportive approach is developing a good professional dialogue with staff. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving. Leaders focus on the progress that pupils make in each lesson. Teaching assistants have been given training to enable them to support pupils' learning more effectively. Teaching assistants also receive helpful feedback from leaders on their work in lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants are growing in confidence as a result of this work.

Leaders ensure that lessons are based on accurate information about what pupils know and understand. They closely monitor teachers' planning and work alongside staff to ensure that it is of consistently high quality. Pupils asked during the visit said that they enjoy their lessons and that they have a good understanding of the feedback they get on their learning. They believe that teaching is improving. A good example of these improvements can be seen in the teaching of mathematics. Teachers now check more regularly that pupils understand what they are learning. As a result, pupils are beginning to make more progress.

The classroom environment and organisation in the Reception classes are improving. A visit to an outstanding provider by all staff enabled the whole team to see what very strong provision looks like. Following this visit, leaders introduced a number of changes to ensure that children make good progress. As a result, outcomes for children are improving.

The governing body acted quickly to address the findings of the review of its work, recommended by the last inspection. A follow-up visit carried out by the reviewer indicated that governors had successfully addressed all the recommendations. The new governing body is developing a sound understanding of the challenges facing the school and the progress it is making. It has used the findings of the recent review to ensure that it continues with the positive developments achieved by the previous governing body. The headteacher is working closely with the new governing body to ensure that it offers sufficient challenge.

External support

The multi-academy trust is supporting improvement in the school effectively. The governing body is well supported and has a clear understanding of its roles and responsibilities as a local governing body. Officers from the multi-academy trust provide leaders with sound support, for example, by monitoring the impact of the improvement work undertaken in the Reception classes. The school has also commissioned additional support when necessary, for example from the local authority early years team.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Portsmouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Minns

Her Majesty's Inspector