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Mr Jonathan Moss
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Mr Moss

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ferney Lee Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 December 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 for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- track the progress of all groups of pupils from their starting points, resulting in adjustments to teaching so that no group of pupils are left behind in their learning
- ensure that outdoor areas used to enhance learning in the early years are clear and that equipment is clean and well maintained
- make further improvements to ensure that teachers' feedback to pupils, in line with the school policy, is timely and helps them to improve their learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the acting deputy headteacher to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. We visited classrooms together, and looked at work in pupils' books. I was able to evaluate the school's action plan and to take into account other planning documents including the review of pupil premium spending. Meetings were held with a representative of the local authority, the school improvement partner and six members of the governing body. Pupils' views were obtained in lessons and at lunchtime.

Context

At the point of the inspection, you were acting as a consultant headteacher to the school for one day each week. You have since been contracted as interim headteacher, for three days per week, to run until August 2018. The deputy headteacher is currently on maternity leave and plans to return to school in the autumn. You are continually on call, but the acting deputy headteacher runs the school on the days in which you are not in school. This year, the leader for special educational needs (SEN) has left. You have recruited two experienced teachers to the vacant posts. The school business manager has also left the school.

Main findings

In 2017, at the end of key stage 2, 71% of pupils attained the expected standard in reading and 57% in writing and mathematics. Fifty per cent of pupils attained the expected standard in all three subjects. Although this represents an improvement on 2016, attainment is still below national figures. Pupils' progress in reading was in the top 20% of schools nationally. Progress in writing was broadly in line with the national average and in mathematics slightly above average. Pupils in key stage 1 did not make enough progress from the end of the early years. Only 44% were at the expected standard in reading, 4% in writing and 33% in mathematics. A lower proportion than average passed the Year 1 phonics screening check.

Working closely with staff and governors, you have achieved considerable gains since the last inspection. You quickly evaluated the effectiveness of the school and made plans to improve the offer for pupils. You introduced school uniform and established expectations of pupils' behaviour. You have introduced more rigorous performance management arrangements that are linked to the progress pupils make. You have brought about swift improvements in teaching, introducing lesson planning and regular training opportunities for staff. Together, you have brought in a more balanced curriculum and teachers are successfully igniting pupils' interests and exploiting topics to enable pupils to practice their reading, writing and mathematics across different subjects. You improved outdoor learning, introducing forest skills lessons. You have brought in specialist teachers of Spanish, physical education and drama to enable pupils to broaden their knowledge and develop their confidence in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics. As a result of

these changes, in the majority of classes, pupils are now receiving an appropriate curriculum.

You have helped teachers to understand the demands of the curriculum and to raise their expectations of what their pupils will do. Consequently, teachers are planning work that is appropriate for the age of their pupils and many pupils are working hard to achieve the tasks set for them. The school's own assessment information shows that more pupils are on track to achieve standards expected for their age. However, because there is a legacy of underachievement, tracking information shows too few pupils are making the rapid progress they need to catch up.

Because learning is now better matched to pupils' needs, pupils are more willing to work hard. English books show that pupils are now presenting their work with pride, using cursive writing. Pupils are keen to write at length and pupils in key stage 2 are responding well to opportunities to draft and edit their work. Pupils' mathematics books show teachers are now planning sequences of learning that enable pupils to gain a better understanding of new concepts. In the majority of classes, pupils are acquiring reasoning skills through well-chosen tasks and investigations.

You have introduced new ways to support vulnerable pupils. You and your staff identify pupils who will benefit from receiving support provided through your specialist teacher in the Den. She assesses pupils' individual needs and ensures bespoke teaching that helps pupils to develop confidence and self-esteem, but with the intention that every pupil will make strong academic progress. The teacher in this class carefully tests pupils to quantify their progress. Although pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are working at standards below their peers, they are now making progress from their starting points.

Leaders cannot currently present precise information to show how well different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are achieving. However, pupils' work in books shows much improved presentation and increased productivity on the part of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

Most teachers have adopted the school policy for marking and feedback to pupils but in the majority of classes, teachers' comments are not helping pupils to improve their learning. The pupils, some of whom undertook a junior inspection of the school in July 2017, share this view. They concluded: 'Teachers could ask more questions in lessons to check children's learning and make them think more.'

Staff and governors have discussed the rules you would like pupils to abide by and together have written the rainbow values. Staff reward pupils according to these values and pupils' behaviour is much improved as a result. You report a drop in the number of incidents of poor behaviour and no pupil exclusions this year. During my visit to the school, I observed a quiet buzz in classrooms. Pupils were on task and enjoying their learning. Pupils are starting to talk about their learning but you acknowledge even more could be to encourage pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning. The junior inspectors concurred with this view, writing that 'all children need to stay focussed in lesson (ALWAYS)'.

You and your staff have successfully encouraged regular attendance. Attendance is up 1 percentage point to just below national average and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen, bringing persistent absence down by 4 percentage points to just below national figures. You have ensured that pupils are safe and secure in almost all aspects of school life, assessing risks to pupils. However, outdoor learning spaces serving the early years are not well kept and much equipment is neglected and damaged.

After the last inspection, several governors left the governing body. You have recruited some new governors and, collectively, governors are keen to fulfil their roles. They have conducted an audit of their skills and generated an action plan. Governors have begun a series of training events. As a result of looking at external assessment information, led by the school improvement partner, they now recognise that standards have not been high enough and that pupils should be making stronger progress as they move through school. Governors are keen to work alongside the interim headteacher to make a difference for pupils. They express ambition, but have until recently been unable to hold leaders to account for the progress pupils have made.

External support

You have quickly engaged the support of a school improvement partner to assist you in developing the skills of leaders in developing the quality of teaching. She has worked effectively with pupils to conduct the junior inspection, and with governors to help develop them in their role. You have welcomed the support of the local authority and acted upon their findings during half-termly visits to school. You have encouraged staff to visit better-performing schools and to reflect and improve their practice back at Ferney Lee.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher

Her Majesty's Inspector