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12 March 2018

Dr Michael Catchpool
Headteacher
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Dear Dr Catchpool

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Milton Road Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 February 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

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 good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that more pupils make above-average progress in writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2, and that pupils are provided with increased opportunities to apply their mathematics skills across the curriculum
- ensure greater consistency in the quality of middle leadership and in the quality of strategic school improvement documentation that these leaders produce, involving them more in the monitoring of teaching through their visits to lessons
- continue to work with the teaching assistants to ensure that they have maximum impact on pupils' learning and progress
- develop the new early years team and further develop the outdoor learning space.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, subject leaders, pupils from Years 5 and 6, the chair and three other members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

I visited all classes to observe pupils' learning and looked at pupils' work in books. I also checked the school's single central register of recruitment checks for staff.

Context

Five new teachers have been appointed since September 2017, three of which are newly qualified. You have appointed a new key stage 1 leader. Four governors are new appointments to the governing body since September 2017. The proportion of pupils at the school who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is steadily increasing.

Main findings

You, your senior leaders and members of the governing body have acted decisively and swiftly to put systems in place to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Your detailed school improvement planning processes ensure that appropriate actions have been taken, along with arrangements to monitor the impact of these actions. It is clear who leads each initiative and to whom they are accountable. You have also included helpful prompts against each action so that leaders and members of the governing body know what questions they should be asking in order to present an appropriate degree of challenge and support. This is a rapidly improving school.

An above-average proportion of pupils met the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. The proportion of pupils achieving at a higher standard in these subjects was well above average. The same pupils made above-average progress in reading and average progress in writing and in mathematics.

As most of your teachers, apart from those who are newly qualified, have a leadership responsibility, you have rightly focused on providing them with well-targeted training on subject leadership. You have ensured greater accountability of these middle leaders by requiring them to maintain a subject evidence folder with clear expectations of what these should contain. You also require all subject leaders to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of their subject as well as to produce a subject improvement plan. Your scrutiny of these documents shows that the quality of these is understandably variable, due to the fact that some of your middle leaders are less experienced than others. Subject leaders are provided with release time from teaching and meet regularly with their line managers. These leaders have also taken on more responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' progress in their subjects. You have already trialled topic assessment sheets

in Year 6 in the summer term 2017, and make effective use of internal and external moderation to assess the accuracy of teachers' assessments.

Subject leaders now have a performance-related target linked to their leadership role. More-experienced subject leaders have been empowered through giving them additional responsibilities for leading on school improvement projects. Others have recently been given the opportunity to lead staff meetings, for example with a focus on science, physical education and personal, social, health and economic education. You rightly acknowledge that the next step for subject leaders is to visit lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching of their subjects once they are fully equipped with the skills to do so.

You have reviewed the effectiveness of your curriculum and have already scheduled a whole-school training day for April based on curriculum development. Pupils speak positively about the way in which you have linked the curriculum to your school's six values of respect, responsibility, kindness, creativity, curiosity and confidence. Classroom displays, including in the early years setting, encourage pupils and children to display their work in an area which links to one of your core values. Your systems for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the curriculum are well established and include half-termly scrutiny of pupils' work, learning walks and observations of lessons. You have also raised the profile of foundation subjects by expecting each class teacher to maintain a visual record of learning activities carried out, which is available to any class visitor on request.

You have arranged several training sessions on how to use assessment information accurately when planning for different groups of pupils' learning. This topic is also regularly discussed at team meetings. Teachers demonstrate a good awareness of the different groups of pupils in their classes, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Pupils are typically offered a range of challenging tasks and usually select a task which is appropriate for them. All classes in Years 1 to 5 now have a learning journey which accurately records what topics are being covered. You have successfully addressed the suggestion from the previous inspection that you increase pupils' curiosity by identifying curiosity as one of your school's values. Pupils' curiosity for their learning has also been enhanced through the weekly cross-curricular 'Fantastical Fridays' sessions, which bring all pupils together to work collaboratively on creative projects using a wide range of approaches.

You have worked well with your teaching assistants and have started to give them the skills they need to help pupils learn more effectively. The regular training they receive through the 'achievement for all' programme is helping to equip them with useful skills. For example, I witnessed teaching assistants using more open-ended questioning when supporting pupils, which encouraged these pupils to think for themselves. Teaching assistants feel more involved in the planning for learning, but further work is required to ensure that their role in the classroom is maximised.

Your mathematics lead teacher has ensured that pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics have been developed over time. Much training has taken place on how

to encourage pupils to apply this essential skill. My scrutiny of pupils' books showed that there is a clear expectation of pupils to demonstrate how they have arrived at an answer. The same scrutiny also suggested that further work is required to encourage pupils to apply their mathematical skills across a wider range of subjects, beyond the mathematics classroom. Visits to other effective schools have taken place to see how they develop pupils' mastery of mathematics, and this effective practice has been shared with the teachers in your school.

Standards achieved by children in the early years have improved over time, with 81% of children achieving a good level of development in 2017, which is above the national average. You have rightly focused on developing children's reading skills. Children's progress in reading is regularly assessed so that next steps are put in place to address any identified decline. Apart from the early years leader, all of the team are new to post. Because of this, additional work is required to ensure that the team works cohesively and that members quickly acquire and develop the skills essential to their role. This team has welcomed the provision of training in how to teach phonics effectively. You have already improved the learning environment in the indoor classroom, which allows children to move around more easily, view visual learning aids and socialise with each other. The next stage of development is to make similar improvements to the outdoor space.

Effective arrangements for the governance of the school have contributed to the school's improvements. Governors have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development. They achieve this through regular visits to the school, which involve discussions with leaders at all levels and a sharp analysis of information on pupils' progress. The introduction of progress-tracking grids for the most vulnerable pupils ensures that governors are able to quickly intervene and challenge leaders if any of these individual pupils' progress appears to have stalled or declined. Governors also regularly review their own effectiveness and identify any training needs through internal reviews.

External support

The local authority has provided helpful support and challenge to the school's leaders. Local authority officers have checked the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation document and the quality of the school improvement plan. Very useful support and guidance have been provided to improve the teaching of mathematics and the effectiveness of the early years provision.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector