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Miss S Cooke
Howes Community Primary School
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Dear Miss Cooke

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Howes Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 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:

- pupils' misconceptions are identified in all lessons, and corrected quickly and effectively
- the most able pupils are challenged in all lessons
- governors continue their drive to hold school leaders to account regarding the improvement in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement action plan, self-evaluation and the pupil premium review. I conducted a learning walk with senior leaders. I examined pupils' books during lessons and during meetings with the English, mathematics and early years leaders.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you and other leaders have responded with understanding and urgency to the judgement that the school requires improvement. You and your deputy headteacher have been determined to create a culture of ambition and aspiration, where all pupils are encouraged to achieve in a caring, well-disciplined environment. As a result, outcomes are improving.

The school development plan is sharply focused on areas for improvement. All leaders and governors have a shared understanding of the areas for improvement and what is being done to address them. The key milestones provide a clear coherent set of steps to achieve the necessary improvement.

The governing body makes regular visits to the school and uses these opportunities well to check on the progress the school is making. For example, they have visited phonics sessions across the early years and key stage 1, and met with the phonics leader to look at the impact of training on improving the teaching of phonics across the school. Governors have also ensured that an external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding has been carried out. Although this review focused more on the school's systems, governors understand the need to challenge you further on the impact of the school's actions on further improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

You have implemented a clear tracking system, which allows you to keep detailed information about different groups of pupils and the progress that they make. You use this information well to evaluate the school's effectiveness and the quality of teaching. You share this information with teachers, who now have much clearer information about pupils' starting points and next steps, and any gaps in pupils' learning.

The systems you have established for managing teachers' performance are clear and provide comprehensive guidance to teachers on how to improve their teaching. Training for teachers and other staff has improved their skills in providing better challenge for pupils. For example, teachers have benefited from training on reasoning, problem-solving, grammar, punctuation and spelling, and from the opportunity to visit other schools to observe high-quality teaching. This has helped to improve teachers' confidence and abilities in teaching these particular topics. Consequently, teaching has improved.

You and your senior leaders correctly identified that the school's approach to teaching mathematics did not promote pupils' reasoning or problem-solving skills well enough. You decided to make changes to the mathematics curriculum and introduced reasoning and problem-solving to the pupils weekly. Inspection evidence demonstrated that pupils are experiencing these elements more often. However, I found evidence in some lessons and workbooks that teachers do not challenge the pupils enough, especially the most able pupils. Some pupils find the work too easy or too hard. Teachers do not always intervene to reshape the task or offer support to secure the pupils' understanding. These weaknesses result in some pupils not fully

understanding what they are learning. Consequently, pupils' progress remains inconsistent.

During the inspection, we looked at pupils' books, both in lessons and during meetings with middle leaders. The books demonstrated that pupils' presentation is improving and they are using basic skills more accurately. Handwriting was neat, and spelling and punctuation were generally accurate. The books demonstrated that, since the start of the year, these elements have improved and pupils are making stronger progress.

You have set clear expectations for teachers and staff across the early years, and you are ably supported in this. Together, you have improved the provision and outcomes for the children. During our learning walk, it was evident that staff know the children well and have a good understanding of the early years curriculum. The learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is well resourced. The children were clearly engaged in a variety of activities, which promoted their basic skills well. Children's individual development is captured in learning journeys, which clearly highlight the rapid progress boys are making in their writing.

The tracking of attendance is highly effective. Staff know the pupils and their families well, and there are good systems to follow up pupils' absences and to encourage punctuality. As a result of this work, attendance is improving and persistent absence has rapidly declined.

External support

Since the section 5 inspection, you have used the support from the local authority and the local networks well. You have established opportunities for teachers to undertake training and observe good and outstanding teaching. The local authority adviser knows the school well and has provided some effective challenge and support to senior leaders. This is ensuring that the school continually evaluates the impact they are having on school improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Kerry Rochester
Ofsted Inspector