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20 March 2018

Mrs Charlotte Davies
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Davies

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Amington Heath Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 8 March 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 three 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:

- teachers provide opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge of grammar, punctuation and vocabulary confidently in their own extended writing
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good across key stage 2.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders. I also met with staff, the chair of governors and two other members of the governing body. I spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I visited all classes with you when we looked at examples of pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning. At different points during the school day, I spoke to parents and I met with two groups of pupils. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's

development plan. We discussed the school's records of pupils' achievement and the outcomes of monitoring activities. We also discussed the impact of performance management.

Context

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in teaching staff and in senior leadership. You joined the school as headteacher in September 2017. Other new appointments include a deputy headteacher and a leader for English. Four governors resigned from the governing body and four new governors have joined. A new vice-chair of the governing body has been elected.

Main findings

Since joining the school in September you have swiftly gained a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Despite significant changes in staffing and leadership, the pace of improvement, identified at the previous inspection, has been sustained. You, and other senior leaders, including governors, are ambitious and determined to continue to drive and sustain improvements. Staff share your vision. There is a strong sense of team spirit and mutual support.

One of the first actions you undertook was to conduct a thorough review of the school's provision for disadvantaged pupils. You also commissioned an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding, as recommended in the previous inspection. As a result of these actions, you have an accurate and detailed picture of the learning needs, and any barriers to learning, of these pupils. Individual pupil support plans are now in place. Staff are clear of their accountabilities. Your records show that the differences in achievement, between disadvantaged pupils and others, is diminishing. You know that this is not yet consistent across all classes and in all subjects. It is clear that you are addressing this through close monitoring and effective performance management systems.

The school's development plan set specific targets, appropriate milestones and timescales for getting the school to good. It also shows that you are making good use of external partners, including the local authority, to help with the evaluation of your improvement actions. The regular reviews mean that you are able to compare your judgements on the school's improvement with those of others.

Monitoring activities are tightly focused on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. There is a comprehensive calendar of monitoring across the term. It shows clearly who will be involved and what they will do and includes a role for the governing body. You hold regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress and check on work in pupils' books. Information gathered is analysed thoroughly and used to provide next steps for teachers and inform action plans. Leaders for English and mathematics take part in monitoring activities with senior leaders. With senior leaders, they provide effective support and guidance to staff.

A key focus of my inspection was the school's work to raise standards in writing and mathematics, particularly in key stage 2. This is because the June 2016 inspection identified a legacy of underachievement in key stage 2 in these subjects.

You have developed a curriculum model to make close links between writing and the topics that pupils are studying in other subjects. As a result, pupils are enthused about writing and are proud of their 'mini-adventure' writing books. Teachers have benefited from effective training to improve the teaching of vocabulary, grammar and punctuation skills. During the inspection, key stage 2 pupils were using grammatical terms accurately to discuss different sentence structures. They were confidently sharing their ideas and making changes to vocabulary and grammar to improve sentences. There is work to be done to ensure that pupils use and apply this knowledge confidently in their own extended writing.

There has been a strong focus on improving teachers' use of assessment information to check pupils' understanding and address gaps in knowledge. Given the issues raised in the last inspection report, you have rightly prioritised this in mathematics. Work in pupils' mathematics books shows that pupils are now expected to go over mistakes and correct misunderstandings. This is beginning to have a positive impact. Your assessment records show that an increasing proportion of pupils are working at the standards expected for their age. This varies across classes in key stage 2. Further work is to be done to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and use of assessment is consistently good across key stage 2. Actions are under way and leaders are well equipped to continue to drive and sustain improvements.

Improving attendance was identified as an area for improvement at your previous inspection. You have taken urgent actions to address this. The family support officer knows the pupils extremely well and works effectively with families and the local authority officers. Pupils talk positively about the reward systems such as the attendance certificates, assemblies and cinema evenings. Your attendance records show improvements when compared to the same period last year but remains below the national average for primary schools. You know that there is still work to do to increase the attendance of some groups of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged.

Governors are clear about what the school needs to do to become good and have taken a range of appropriate actions since the inspection. Documentation shows that they are frequently checking that the actions in the school improvement plan are effectively addressing the improvement priorities.

External support

Leaders benefit from reviews conducted by the school's improvement partner, commissioned by the local authority. Together, you check objectively the rate of improvement and set appropriate 'next steps'. You also benefit from working in partnership with local schools. You encourage members of your staff to strengthen

their knowledge and skills by visiting other schools to learn from others and share their own practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram

Her Majesty's Inspector