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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Anita Wilcox
Headteacher
Dover Park Primary School
Dover Street
Ryde
Isle of Wight
PO33 2BN

Dear Ms Wilcox

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dover Park Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 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 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:

- develop the assessment system to check pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics
- strengthen the school improvement plan by adding targets for groups of pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I conducted a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. You led me on a tour of the school and provided me with a wide range of the school's documentation to scrutinise. We discussed the actions taken since the last

inspection. I met your English and mathematics leaders and they showed me samples of pupils' work. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I also examined the school's most recent information about pupils' performance with you and your deputy headteacher.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership, staffing and governance of the school. A new leader of the early years joined the school in September 2016, a leader of mathematics started in September 2017 and a new deputy headteacher took up post in January 2018. Since September 2017, there have been changes to the teaching staff in Years 6, 5 and 4. The governing body has been reformed: there is a new chair and vice-chair of the governing body and four new governors have been appointed.

Main findings

You provide strong leadership of the school. You have a clear vision for the high standards expected at the school and have shown determination in pursuit of improvement. You rightly focused on establishing better systems for monitoring the performance of pupils and staff. Leaders and governors now have a more accurate understanding of the strengths and remaining weaknesses of the school. Leaders' actions are successfully tackling the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

Since the inspection, you have prioritised improving the quality of teaching and learning. The need for improvement in key stage 2 was given further impetus by disappointing Year 6 outcomes in 2017. Attainment was well below the national average for reading and mathematics, and pupils' progress in reading and mathematics was below average. This is in contrast with stronger performance by younger pupils. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by pupils in Year 2 remained at or just above national averages. The proportion of Year 1 pupils who met the phonics screening check standard was much higher than the national average. From low starting points on entry, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development by the end of Reception Year was above the national average for the third year in succession.

Supported by governors, you took decisive action to improve the quality of teaching in key stage 2. This led to changes in the teaching staff in 3 out of the 4 classes during this academic year. Your monitoring information shows that teaching is now more effective and, consequently, pupils are making faster progress. The work I saw in pupils' books confirms this. However, due to some previously weaker teaching, pupils in some classes have catching up to do, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics. Leaders have only recently started to track pupils' progress in a range of subjects across the school, and this needs strengthening.

During my visits to classrooms, the atmosphere was purposeful and pupils were appropriately engaged in a range of learning activities. The teaching strategies used were consistent across all classes. Pupils were confidently using resources and classroom displays to help their thinking. We did not see any low-level disruption. Pupils were focused on the tasks set and adults were checking carefully how well individuals were progressing. Teachers and teaching assistants were quick to provide pupils with support and additional challenge when necessary. You explained the steps taken to improve teaching through bespoke coaching of individuals alongside whole-staff training. The pupils I spoke to explained what they were learning clearly and enthusiastically, and were working well together. Pupils were taking great care with the presentation of their work.

The early years leader has sustained the strengths in Reception Year which were identified at the previous inspection and has skilfully improved the provision further. Her systematic approach to helping children improve their pencil grip, coupled with a new approach to storytelling, is helping children to rapidly improve their writing. On my visit to the early years area, some boys were enthusiastically using their imagination to create and write stories. A wall display showing how children write their own names demonstrated their progress from the start of Reception Year markedly.

Following her arrival last September, your mathematics subject leader rapidly identified the priorities for improvement and could show me the impact of work taken to address these so far. The mathematics leader expects pupils throughout the school to develop their ability to reason and explain their thinking. On my tour of classrooms, and through scrutiny of pupils' work, I found that pupils are tackling more difficult mathematical tasks. You have benefited from participation in a mathematics improvement partnership on the island, run by the local authority. The leader insightfully identified that some staff require further subject training to build on current improvements in the teaching of mathematics.

Leaders share a clear vision to enable every pupil in the school to thrive and achieve well. The deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs (SEN) coordinator, has oversight of the progress of disadvantaged pupils. She checks that pupils' diverse needs and starting points are accurately identified. Staff are working effectively with parents and outside agencies to provide the right support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Leaders ensure that assessment information is used to measure the impact of interventions designed to help pupils with SEN and/or disabilities to progress well. Disadvantaged pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities benefit from this methodical approach. Additional pupil premium funding is well targeted to help disadvantaged pupils overcome barriers and difficulties they face. Leaders evaluate the success of these actions and decide which ones to continue. Nevertheless, governors do not yet have clarity about the overall impact of this expenditure on the progress of disadvantaged pupils compared with that of other pupils nationally with the same starting points.

The governing body has changed significantly. The new chair of the governing body has successfully recruited new governors with wide-ranging and relevant expertise. They are currently undergoing training and are increasingly providing effective challenge and support to school leaders.

You and your team are rightly proud of the improvements at the school and are clear about the next steps needed to maintain this trajectory. There are a sensible number of priorities in the school improvement plan. Governors visit the school regularly to see for themselves the impact of actions taken by leaders. Governors are aware of the level of care shown for individual pupils and the steps taken to support those in danger of falling behind. However, the performance of groups, such as pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils (including the most able disadvantaged), is less well understood. School development plans do not identify targets or milestones for groups of pupils. This makes it difficult for governors to hold senior leaders to account for the actions they have taken to improve the progress of specific groups of pupils.

External support

School leaders and teachers are benefiting from effective support provided by advisers from Hampshire local authority who have played an important role in driving improvements at the school. The link adviser offers appropriate challenge and support. Other advisers are helping to improve leadership and teaching and learning, particularly in English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector