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Mr Sam Atkinson
Headteacher
Dame Janet Primary Academy
Newington Road
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CT12 6QY

Dear Mr Atkinson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dame Janet Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 the trust 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. I am recommending that the next section 5 inspection be brought forward.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, a representative of the multi-academy trust and the chair of the joint local governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and pupil premium information were evaluated. I met your attendance officer and reviewed current pupils' attendance levels. I met a group of teaching assistants and spoke with a range of key stage 2 pupils at lunch. I visited a number of classrooms with senior leaders and we evaluated work in pupils' books.

Context

There have been several staff changes since the last inspection. The majority of teachers in key stage 1 have joined the school since 2016. You have a new assistant headteacher and several new middle leaders.

Main findings

Leaders have taken swift, decisive and effective action to improve the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, standards are rising rapidly. In 2016 and 2017, Year 6 pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, made very good progress from their key stage 1 starting points. Key stage 2 pupils at Dame Janet make much better progress than other pupils nationally. Current pupils are making good progress. A broad and interesting curriculum ensures that pupils develop a broad and rich vocabulary. This helps them to write to a high standard and infer meaning when they are reading. Older pupils enjoy coming to school and value the way that teachers make learning 'fun'.

Leaders have improved the training opportunities for teaching assistants, including in relation to the teaching of phonics. As a result, each year more pupils meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Teaching assistants value the work of school leaders. Long-serving staff feel that the school 'is in the best place it has ever been'.

Leaders have a clear and accurate view of what the school is doing well and what can be even better. For example, leaders are currently supporting staff to improve pupils' mathematical reasoning. Recent staff training in this area is beginning to have a positive impact in classrooms. Leaders have a detailed understanding about the progress that groups of pupils are making.

More pupils are coming to school more regularly, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Staff have vastly improved their oversight of pupils' attendance levels. They target and incentivise those at risk of having poor attendance, and take appropriate robust action where parents do not bring children to school often enough. Consequently, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has almost halved.

Leaders and the trust did not commission a review of pupil premium spending after the last inspection. In 2016 and 2017 disadvantaged key stage 2 pupils made significantly better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than other pupils nationally. Leaders have, over time, sharpened and improved their planning regarding how they intend to spend additional funding. However, leaders need to continue to look closely at the impact of their actions on all pupils, including those in the early years. Leaders and the trust have scheduled an external evaluation of their work to raise standards for disadvantaged pupils in May 2018.

The trust did not commission an external review of governance after the last inspection. However, the trust has reorganised governance at school and locality level. The school governing committee and the joint local governing body are very clear about each other's roles and responsibilities. However, the groups with a delegated responsibility to question leaders about standards are not looking closely enough at the impact of pupil premium spending. The trust is the body which holds leaders to account. Leaders have valued the increased rigour and focus of this work

since the last inspection. Robust quality assurance systems ensure that the trust has a clear view of the school's strengths and development points.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole

Her Majesty's Inspector