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Mr S Robertson
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Robertson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Broadlands Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 April 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. It has taken place because the school has received judgements of requires improvement at its three most recent 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:

- provide a consistent level of challenge for the most able pupils, so that the proportions of pupils reaching the higher standards rise across the whole school
- ensure that the teaching of reading is given a higher priority on the school improvement plan
- make sure that the school improvement plan and the subject action plans identify more precisely when actions will happen and how they will be measured for impact.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection with: the executive headteacher; the deputy headteacher; the head of learning; three middle leaders; members of the governing body; and a representative of the local authority. I undertook a learning walk and observed behaviour at lunchtime. I evaluated the school's improvement plan, checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and notes from external support visits, including an external review of governance. I also analysed the quality of work in pupils' books, and assessment information of pupils' current progress.

Context

Broadlands Primary School is part of a federation of three schools comprising one secondary school and two primary schools. You were appointed permanently as executive headteacher of the federation in September 2017. A new leadership structure has been put in place at the school since the last inspection. You and the deputy headteacher provide strategic oversight and direction for the school. The head of learning and the key stage leaders are responsible for the day-to-day management of the school. One new teacher has started and there is one temporary teacher covering a maternity leave. Three new governors have been appointed and the chair instigated a review of the governing body.

Main findings

You have started to address successfully the areas for improvement outlined at the previous inspection. As a result, the consistency of teaching has improved. Sensibly, you recognise that some actions need embedding fully, so that teaching continues to improve and pupils' attainment rises.

A key ingredient of the recent improvement is the development of leadership capacity. A new leadership structure has ensured that responsibilities are more widely distributed among senior and middle leaders. Leaders are clear on their roles and are enjoying an increased level of responsibility. However, this structure is relatively new and you acknowledge that it needs continual review to ensure that it has maximum impact on improving attainment across the school.

The federation's deputy headteacher works closely with the head of learning to carry out effective checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Teachers receive frequent and precise feedback on their planning and teaching. Pupil progress meetings between leaders and teachers ensure that pupils who fall behind are given additional support to help them catch up in their learning. These processes help leaders to have a deeper understanding of the impact that teaching has on pupils' progress.

Middle leaders speak highly about the quality of the training and support that they receive. Specific training on middle leadership skills has helped them to gain a better understanding of their responsibilities. The mathematics leader has used her training

as a catalyst for several whole-school improvements to the teaching of mathematics. For example, pupils are motivated by a new times table reward programme, and learning about mastery in mathematics has improved teachers' confidence in teaching the subject. The physical education (PE) leader has raised the profile of the subject significantly. The PE and sport premium is used effectively to improve the quality of PE and increase competitive sport opportunities.

Collaboration between the schools in the federation is building momentum, and helps to develop teachers' and leaders' skills. A range of joint training and moderation opportunities ensure that staff are reflecting more effectively on their own teaching. They enjoy sharing their own practice and seeking to learn from the practice of others. You also create opportunities to learn from best practice in schools outside the federation.

The school improvement plan for the academic year 2016/17 was effective and enabled necessary improvements. Appropriate priorities were identified and successfully addressed. In the main improvement plan, outcomes were analysed well, which enabled you to know if actions were having the desired impact. However, in the subject improvement plans, the success criteria are not sufficiently measurable. The improvement plan for the academic year 2017/18 does not have sufficient emphasis on the teaching of reading or how the school is going to ensure that teachers challenge the most able pupils to reach the higher standards. Improvement plans do have timescales within which actions are going to happen, but these are not precise enough. The leadership capacity has grown since the last inspection and the improvement plans need to keep pace with this growth, so that leaders know exactly when they are carrying out actions and how the success of their work will be measured.

Teaching has improved since the last inspection, but there is still work to do. You have raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should do. As a result, pupils carry out work that is better matched to their ability. However, this is not consistent across the different classes. One issue that is prevalent across the whole school is that teachers do not provide consistent challenge for the most able pupils. From Reception to Year 6, the proportions of pupils who reach standards that are higher than those expected for their age are low when compared to national figures.

You rightly identified mathematics as a key focus for improvement. The work in pupils' books and the teaching I observed on inspection demonstrate that the consistency of teaching has improved. Pupils use a range of resources and pictures to help support their understanding of new concepts. This helps to build their confidence, so that they can tackle increasingly challenging calculations and problems. Teachers are gradually putting in place more consistent opportunities for reasoning, both through pupils' verbal and written responses.

The quality of presentation in pupils' written work has improved. Teachers have put in place a range of strategies, such as presentation targets, prompts for pupils and pen licences. As a result, most pupils take pride in producing their best work.

Leaders' checks on pupils' books show that there are still some examples of presentation that do not meet expectations, particularly in writing.

At the end of the academic year 2016/17, outcomes for Year 6 pupils declined from the previous year. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in mathematics and reading were below the national averages. Your assessment information shows that the current Year 6 pupils' attainment is likely to rise closer to the national average. However, their attainment in mathematics is still a concern. This group of pupils was adversely affected by interruptions to staffing when they were in Year 5 and in previous years. Staffing is now more stable in the school and they have made better progress in Year 6, particularly in reading. You recognise that attainment needs to continue to rise by the end of key stage 2.

Outcomes elsewhere in the school have risen steadily. In the early years, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development was in line with the national average in 2017. At the end of key stage 1, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards have risen and are either above or in line with national averages. Not enough pupils reached the higher standard expected for their age at the end of Reception, key stage 1 or key stage 2.

Staff have worked hard to ensure that other aspects of the school have improved. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and they behave well in class. In recent years, more pupils with complex needs have started at the school and staff manage them well. Pupils are proud of their work. This was demonstrated by a recent exhibition of pupils' work on the First World War at Hereford Cathedral and around Hereford City. Pupils' attendance at a range of extra-curricular clubs has also increased since the previous inspection.

The chair leads the governing body well. A national leader of governance carried out a review of the governing body's effectiveness. The review outlined several key areas for improvement that have been successfully addressed. Governors have a broad range of skills and offer an effective level of challenge to leaders through meetings and visits.

External support

The local authority has supported the school well. A range of initiatives have contributed to improvements in teaching and leadership. For example, successful projects in the early years and Year 6 have enabled staff to learn from best practice and collaborate with other schools. The local authority is concerned about outcomes at the end of key stage 2 and continues to provide challenge to ensure that attainment rises. A rigorous review carried out by a national leader of education, on behalf of local authority, provided useful next steps for school leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Meekin
Her Majesty's Inspector