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Ms Alison Helm
Acting Headteacher
North Beckton Primary School
Harrier Way
Beckton
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Dear Ms Helm

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to North Beckton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the executive headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement and action plans were evaluated. Many classrooms were visited jointly with either the headteacher or senior leaders, and a range of documents were scrutinised, including the school's assessment information, minutes of governors' meetings and attendance rates.

Context

Since the recent inspection, there have been some significant changes to the school's leadership team. You have been the acting headteacher for just under a year and the responsibilities of senior and middle leaders have been reorganised. The governing body has also been restructured, with a number of governors leaving office.

Main findings

Since your appointment as acting headteacher in May 2017 you have taken effective action to raise standards and improve pupils' outcomes. An important part of this work has been the significant improvements in leadership and management, including making sure that systems and procedures are fit for purpose. This work has had a positive impact right across the school. Teaching and learning have improved, and pupils' outcomes are considerably better than at the previous inspection. You recognise that there is still some work to do to ensure that the school becomes good. However, that so much has been achieved in a short time is testament to the way you, senior leaders and governors have added to the school's capacity for continued improvement. As a result, there is a very solid platform on which to build to ensure that the school is judged good at its next inspection.

You, your senior team and governors have identified the school's weaknesses honestly and accurately. You know exactly what needs to be done to improve the quality of education and have seized the opportunity make improvements with a clear sense of vision and purpose. The lack of structure, a poorly planned curriculum and little direction for the school have been significant barriers to overcome. However, good-quality improvement planning, including a complete revision of the curriculum, have been implemented effectively. With the support of the Tapscott Trust and the local authority, you have established a very positive culture in which learning and achievement are at the heart of the school. As a result, the most pressing weaknesses have been tackled successfully.

To improve teaching and learning, you have set up a well-defined system for tracking, checking and assessing pupils' outcomes. The information you collect is robust and secure, ensuring that pupils who fall behind are spotted quickly. This enables leaders to ensure that support is directed to where it is most needed.

The procedures to check the quality of teaching are systematic and secure. As a result, senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are able to provide well-targeted support. Where necessary, senior leaders have tackled underperforming teachers effectively. Performance management is linked closely to the national teachers' standards and includes a range of opportunities for support, such as team teaching, observing others and mentoring.

Middle leaders take a central role in the work to improve teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes. Their development has been well supported by the trust. Middle leaders are confident about using the assessment information to hold others to account, as well as providing support. They are clear about the expectations of senior leaders and have risen to the challenge well.

The teachers I spoke with were positive about the changes and improvements over the past year or so. They were very clear that the reorganisation of leadership has not just improved accountability, but also helped to raise standards of teaching and learning. This is because leaders at all levels are clear about what their job entails and are supported effectively by senior staff and governors.

The visits we made jointly to classrooms show clearly that your focus on improving teaching quality and pupils' outcomes is paying off. There were two especially clear features: pupils' behaviour was excellent, and the way many teachers made learning interesting and purposeful. For example, teachers used their subject knowledge well to motivate and provide challenging work, including for the most able. This is helping to improve pupils' progress effectively. However, as you recognise, high-quality teaching is not yet consistent across all classes and, in some cases, needs to improve further. This includes ensuring that the most able are challenged fully.

Provision in the resource base for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is well led and managed. You are rightly concerned that the accommodation and facilities are inadequate and there are clear plans to refurbish the main building to better cater for these pupils.

The achievements of disadvantaged pupils have improved. As a result, the difference between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and those of others is diminishing. However, you have rightly identified that more work is needed to ensure that pupils reach their potential, and have thus prioritised the achievements of disadvantaged pupils while keeping a clear focus on the most able.

The considerable work you and your staff have undertaken to put the curriculum on a proper footing has revitalised teaching. This is because teachers work together to plan the curriculum and make sure that learning is built upon in a structured way. As a result, pupils are making clear progress in extending their knowledge and understanding.

Extra-curricular activities support the revised curriculum especially well. There are a wide range of clubs, activities and visits that both extend pupils' learning and help them to consolidate their thinking. All pupils are entitled to attend two clubs or activities each week and, currently, 75% of pupils do so. Visits also contribute effectively to pupils' learning. For example, Year 4 pupils visit the Ragged School Museum as part of their work on the Victorians.

Overall attendance remains below the national figure but has improved considerably this year. This is the result of better procedures to follow up absences with parents and carers and closer scrutiny of the reasons for absence. In addition, you have introduced incentives for pupils to attend regularly, with rewards for good attendance. While persistent absence has reduced, you are rightly concerned that it is still too high. However, you have clear plans to continue to improve this, including working closely with key families.

Governors have commissioned an external review of governance which confirms that changes are having a positive impact. Governors have acted on the recommendations of the last inspection effectively. For example, they have changed the structure of the governing body and have recruited new governors so that there is a broader range of relevant skills. Governors carry out their safeguarding duties effectively and have had appropriate training, including for safer recruitment and child sexual exploitation.

External support

The Tapscott Trust and the local authority provide strong support. The school has taken full advantage of this support. The partnership with the trust ensures that improvements are sustainable and have a significantly positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment. In addition, governors have acted swiftly on the recommendations of the external review of governance. This, too, has resulted in clear improvements to the way in which governors both support and challenge leaders.

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 London Borough of Newham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian Oppenheim
Her Majesty's Inspector