

16 May 2018

Mrs Anne Binns
Principal
Olympic Primary School
Olympic Way
Wellingborough
Northamptonshire
NN8 3QA

Dear Mrs Binns

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Olympic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 May 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 I received in your absence and for the time leaders 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 not 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:

- increase the pace of improvement by urgently addressing the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the acting principal, other senior leaders and a group of middle leaders. I also met with representatives from The Education Fellowship Trust, the chair of the local governing body and representatives of the Lion Academy Trust, who are providing external support for the school, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I carried out a tour of the school with the acting principal to see lessons taking place in most year groups and I met with a large

group of pupils. I undertook an extensive scrutiny of pupils' workbooks. I checked that the school's records of safeguarding checks met requirements.

Context

You, the substantive principal, are currently absent from the school. The vice principal was appointed as acting principal in March 2018. With the agreement of the trust and the local governing body, the acting principal carried out a review of the school's senior and middle leadership teams. This was done in order to facilitate the required improvements to leadership and management recommended at the last inspection.

Parents have been informed that The Education Fellowship Trust is in the process of transferring all of its schools to new sponsors. There have been some delays in implementing the necessary changes and at the time of the inspection arrangements for the school to join a new multi-academy trust had not been finalised.

Main findings

The quality of teaching and learning has not improved urgently enough since the last inspection. Workbooks show that teachers' expectations for the quality and presentation of pupils' written work are not high enough. The quality of pupils' handwriting is not consistently good, denoting a lack of pride in their work. From March 2018, leaders introduced a system by which pupils can check and assess their work in order to understand and learn from their mistakes. Pupils confirm that they understand this process and are beginning to use it in their daily work; however, this change has not yet led to an improvement in the quality of their written work.

Leaders have made positive changes to the teaching of reading. This has been done in order to provide greater challenge for the most able readers and to improve their reading comprehension skills. The most able readers are now identified from the earliest age and are taught in groups according to their needs. Senior and middle leaders described with confidence how they have introduced a number of other new approaches to the teaching of reading. They have also ensured the improved provision of high-quality books for pupils. As a result of these improvements, pupils with whom I met spoke with enthusiasm about their reading. Pupils say they read often in school and say they welcome the greater degree of challenge in the books available to them. The school's latest assessment information shows that in several year groups, including in Year 2 and Year 6, the most able pupils are making good and improved progress in reading.

Until very recently, teachers did not use assessment effectively to inform their planning and teaching. They did not use their analysis of how well pupils are doing to plan the next steps needed and to ensure cumulative good progress as pupils proceed through the school. From February 2018, leaders have placed a greater emphasis on the need for teachers to precisely and regularly analyse the gaps in

pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers with whom I spoke confirmed that this new approach to assessment enables them to plan more effectively. This enables them to make sure that each group of pupils receives the precise teaching they need to improve. During my visit, I saw teachers using assessment effectively in lessons to direct and support learning. However, this recent revised approach to assessment has not yet had an impact on the quality of work in books or on pupils' outcomes.

Leaders have made sure that the school's key priorities for improvement are prominently displayed around school. Staff with whom I spoke confirmed their understanding of what needs to improve. However, in the current action plans leaders have not precisely identified how and when the success of their actions will be measured. In addition, the current plans do not show a review of the impact of any previous actions taken in the spring or autumn terms. Therefore the school's plans for improvement are not fit for purpose.

Since her appointment in March 2018, the acting principal has strengthened the leadership of the school by reconfiguring the senior and middle leadership teams. Consequently, there is a greater degree of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities within the school. The revised leadership team has a united view on what the school needs to do in order to improve. Although this change is a promising indication of the capacity of leaders to drive improvement, it did not happen quickly or urgently enough and the impact on pupils' outcomes is yet to be tested.

The local governing body has also strengthened its role in relation to the school since the last inspection. Through some positive recruitment, governors have ensured that a wide range of skills and experience is represented. Members of the local governing body have begun to join leaders for a variety of monitoring activities in order to assure themselves of the impact of any improvement work. Governors increasingly ask challenging questions in their meetings and are increasingly holding leaders to account for the work of the school. Nevertheless, the future of the local governing body is uncertain in view of the proposed transfer of the school to a different multi-academy trust.

The Education Fellowship Trust, which has responsibility for the school, acknowledge that the trust does not have the capacity to provide the degree of support required in order to bring about rapid and sustained improvement. As a result of the imminent demise of the trust itself, and in view of your absence, there is still a degree of uncertainty about significant aspects of leadership and management.

External support

From December 2017, the school has received effective external support from the Lion Academy Trust. Representatives from the trust are currently working closely with senior leaders in order to address the areas for improvement. They have rightly prioritised the need to improve leadership and management and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment as key objectives. Senior and middle leaders say

they appreciate the opportunities they have had, through this partnership, to visit other schools and observe good practice. The chair of the local governing body acknowledges the effective support provided by the Lion Academy Trust. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of this external support on pupils' outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of The Education Fellowship Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Watkins
Her Majesty's Inspector