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Jane Foster
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Foster

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hallgate Primary School Cottingham

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 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:

- ensure that low prior-attaining pupils are given appropriate teaching in the early years and Year 1 to enable them to quickly catch up
- maintain the focus on and strengthen the work already begun to enable disadvantaged pupils to achieve standards in line with other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders and middle leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with the vice-chair of the governing body and the local authority school improvement partner.

I spoke with pupils in classrooms and at lunchtime. I considered your assessment information and together we looked at pupils' work in books.

Context

You were newly appointed at the time of the last inspection and fully accepted the outcome. Since then, six teachers have left the school. You have wasted no time in securing capable teachers, and staff and governors feel that you have brought about stability and a sense of belonging to a team through these appointments.

Main findings

You have brought your experience, calmness and steely manner to transforming Hallgate Primary School. You quickly realised that you needed to use the skills of all staff to best effect in order to bring about the change so badly needed. You have successfully developed the skills of middle leaders so that they now share the task of improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

As a result of much improved teaching, in 2017, pupils' outcomes were vastly better than in the past. At the end of key stages 1 and 2, pupils attained standards above the national average in reading and writing. Pupils' attainment in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average. Pupils made better progress. Key stage 2 pupils' progress in reading and mathematics was in the top 40% of schools and their progress in writing was in the top 20%. You and the governing body acknowledge the need to continue to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school to ensure that this trend continues. Work in pupils' books throughout the school shows that the vast majority of current pupils are now working at least at the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils working at higher levels is much higher than in previous years, illustrating teachers' determination to push pupils onwards and upwards.

You quickly set about establishing the 'golden rules' which help pupils to manage their own behaviour. Pupils are happy in school. They explain what happens if any pupils misbehave but say that this is not something that happens often. In classrooms, pupils are keen to demonstrate resilience in learning and to take on challenges. You introduced 'super learner' strategies to help pupils to recognise and foster characteristics that will sustain them and develop them as learners. Hence, pupils recognise that they need to 'have a go' when learning feels difficult. Consequently, most pupils sustain concentration during lessons and take pride in their work.

You are developing an enthusiastic and capable team of teachers and additional adults who want to improve and to provide strong learning opportunities for pupils. Teachers are keen to deliver learning in ways which appeal to pupils, linking learning through different themes and subjects wherever appropriate. Pupils practise English and mathematics skills through science, for example. Pupils' books showed that science experiments, though infrequently recorded, were written to a high standard. Pupils themselves say 'learning is fun'.

Teachers apply the school's feedback policy and pupils are beginning to act on comments from their teachers, although pupils' books show that there is still some variation in how effectively teachers are moving pupils on through their feedback.

Middle leaders for English and mathematics have helped teachers to assess pupils' work more effectively and to use this information to adapt teaching. Leaders check rigorously the accuracy of teachers' assessments and they work with staff from other schools to compare standards. This is helping to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils' books show that middle and high prior-attaining pupils are thriving but some low prior-attaining pupils are still not making the rapid progress they need to catch up with their peers. This is because some pupils arrive in Year 1 lacking the basic skills they need to make rapid progress in reading and writing.

You commissioned a review of the school's spending of the pupil premium funding and followed the recommendations contained in the report. You have developed leaders to 'champion' disadvantaged pupils in school. As a result, teachers now take much better account of the needs of disadvantaged pupils when planning learning. The actions you and the staff are taking are beginning to bear fruit, so disadvantaged pupils are starting to catch up with their peers. However, there are still big differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.

External support

East Riding local authority has provided effective support to enable you to tackle some of the issues you faced on arriving at the school. The local authority has worked alongside middle leaders and yourself to develop leadership capacity. Staff have attended a whole raft of training focused on different areas of teaching and learning. The local authority commissioned staff from the Ebor Academy Trust to work alongside teachers in the school. Consequently, teachers and teaching assistants have developed their questioning skills and significantly improved planning so that teaching is much better matched to the needs of pupils.

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 East Riding of Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher
Her Majesty's Inspector