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25 June 2018

Mrs Webb
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Webb

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Four Dwellings Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 12 June 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, governors and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that additional support is put in place to improve the weaknesses that reside in early years and Year 1.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, middle leaders, the trust's system leader, and governors and had a telephone conversation with representatives from the trust, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

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. I scrutinised records in relation to behaviour and bullying. I also analysed the quality of work in pupils' books and assessment information of pupils' current progress.

Context

Four Dwellings Primary Academy is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust. Since the previous inspection in February 2017, a number of staff changes have taken place. The headteacher left in April 2017 and an executive headteacher from the trust led the school for the summer term. You started in your role as headteacher in September 2017. For transition purposes, the executive headteacher continued in her role in the first half of the autumn term. She has since continued to provide school improvement support for the trust in her role as a systems leader. In September 2017, a new deputy headteacher started, two middle leaders within the school were appointed into assistant headteacher posts and five new class teachers started. The governing board has had two new chairs since the previous inspection.

Main findings

Since starting at the school, you have brought about a period of stability and purpose. You have an accurate view of the quality of teaching in the school and use this understanding to focus on appropriate priorities for improvement. While clear improvements have been made, you are determined to swiftly address some of the inconsistencies that remain.

You put a strong focus on developing other leaders. As a result, they are having an increasingly positive impact within their areas of responsibility. You use coaching methods to enable them to be more reflective as leaders. They speak positively about the support that they receive. You rightly identify that they are ready to be involved with school improvement more regularly. For example, they are analysing pupils' progress for their own class, but not yet for their areas of responsibility.

Action plans are fit for purpose and help to bring about improvement. You have a clear idea of where plans need to go next. The previous inspection highlighted that provision needed to improve for the most able pupils. Sensibly, you put the initial focus on ensuring that teachers have a secure understanding of expected standards. You are now going to put a stronger emphasis on developing teachers' understanding of the higher standards. Some improvement plans, including the pupil premium plan, do not have sufficiently measurable success criteria. As a result, plans cannot be measured for impact as effectively as they should be.

Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. A new whole-school approach to the teaching of writing is helping pupils to develop the quality of their language and handwriting. The work in pupils' books shows that their reading comprehension

skills are improving. Several pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the whole-class book that they are reading. Teaching in mathematics has improved, but not as swiftly. Evidence in pupils' books shows that they do not receive a consistent level of challenge, particularly in applying their skills through reasoning problems.

The quality of teaching in Year 1 and Reception is inconsistent and requires more attention. Staffing disruptions in Year 1 have led to both classes being taught by temporary teachers. Teacher recruitment for next academic year has not taken place soon enough for these vacancies to be filled. Progress for children in Reception is not rapid enough. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development declined and was well below the national average. The quality of teaching is not demanding enough and the outdoor area is not sufficiently focused on deepening children's learning. You are aware that greater early years expertise is required in the leadership team.

Regular moderation opportunities have enabled the accuracy of teacher assessment to improve. Staff use this information to plan work that better meets the needs of pupils. This increasingly accurate assessment information enables leaders to track pupils' attainment more reliably. In 2017, at the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards was low compared to national figures. You provided convincing assessment information to show that attainment in Year 6 has risen this academic year. However, you still have a firm focus on other year groups where attainment is not as positive, particularly in Year 1 and Year 5.

Attendance has improved since last academic year. In 2017, it dipped and was well below the national average. A member of the leadership team has taken responsibility for ensuring the effective use of procedures to monitor and improve attendance. The systems now work well with other staff, pupils and parents and carers. Consequently, attendance levels are moving in the right direction.

You have worked with staff to establish key behaviour values, so that pupils understand what is expected of them. Staff use the new rewards by praising pupils when they notice them demonstrating the values. During the inspection, behaviour in classrooms was positive. However, behaviour at social times was not as good. The number of fixed-term exclusions has risen significantly and is high. Support for pupils who have complex behavioural needs is not yet having the desired impact, particularly at social times.

The leadership of special educational needs (SEN) is going through transition. A special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has been identified and is taking part in appropriate training. The identification and assessment procedures are now more accurate, and external services are being involved in a timely way.

Since the previous inspection, the governing board has had an interim chair. A new chair has just been appointed. Governors have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. There is a genuine desire and commitment

to keep improving the school. Some governors feel that the quality of external support could be further improved.

External support

The trust guided the school through leadership change by putting in post an executive headteacher in the summer term of 2017. They also ensured that the new headteacher had more intensive support in her first half term. The trust's system leader has provided effective leadership support to the headteacher. She also arranged for leaders from her own school to support in particular areas. Middle leaders spoke positively about the trust's conferences and how they have helped them learn from, and network with, other leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Meckin

Her Majesty's Inspector