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Mrs Helen Haynes
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Haynes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Carter Knowle Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 21 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 and governors 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:

- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good and is providing a suitable level of challenge in all subjects, resulting in strong progress for pupils
- middle leaders are responsible for improvements in teaching, learning and assessment in wider curriculum subjects, which are monitored and evaluated effectively.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the chair of governors, senior

and middle leaders and a local authority representative to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated, and I viewed the school's evaluations of teaching and learning. I observed lessons across all year groups and spoke to pupils about their learning and their opinions. Alongside the mathematics leader and assistant headteacher, I scrutinised pupils' work. I observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime and as they moved around the school. I spoke to parents and carers at the start and end of the school day. Safeguarding information and records of pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance were also examined.

Context

Six months prior to the last inspection, you were appointed as substantive executive headteacher. At the same time, the head of school took on her role in a permanent capacity. Since the last inspection, one teacher has left and two members of staff, including one senior leader, have taken maternity leave. Difficulties in finding suitable cover for these positions have created some instability. You now have suitable arrangements in place and have no current staff vacancies. There are two vacancies on the governing body. In autumn 2017, one teacher became a specialist leader in education.

Main findings

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching of reading comprehension skills. Leaders correctly identified that the progress of many pupils was hindered by their under-developed inference skills and their lack of understanding of the meanings of words. Following targeted professional development, teachers are now better equipped to give pupils appropriately challenging activities in relation to these two aspects of reading comprehension. Teachers now have higher expectations of pupils' answers and are becoming increasingly skilled in providing scaffolds and stretching pupils to explain in depth. Pupils are beginning to have more frequent opportunities in wider curriculum subjects to broaden their vocabulary and to improve their inference skills. As a result of these initiatives, the majority of pupils are now making stronger progress in reading. Leaders are fully aware that there remains some variability in the quality of teaching of reading and have plans in place to strengthen this further.

The previous inspection also identified that pupils would benefit from more regular opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics. The mathematics leader has been successful in revising the school's approach to teaching mathematics, to include a suitable emphasis on these two aspects. Pupils' books show that most pupils now receive high-quality teaching in this area and that, consequently, pupils are making better progress in mathematics. Leaders acknowledge that there is more work to do to embed this approach fully and make sure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistent across the school.

In 2017, Year 6 pupils' attainment was above average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, leaders know that many pupils did not make sufficient progress in reading or mathematics. The strategies leaders have put in place to improve the quality of teaching and learning in these subjects are beginning to result in stronger progress for pupils currently in school.

The strengthening of the quality of teaching and learning is reflected in pupils' improved learning behaviours. During the inspection, I was able to see attentive pupils, across all year groups, who were eager to participate. This is because strong relationships exist between staff and pupils, and adults have high expectations of pupils' conduct. As a result, pupils were conscientious, focused and enjoying their learning. Although some instances of bullying and discriminatory language remain, these occurrences are reducing because you deal with them stringently.

At the last inspection, you were also challenged to ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain, by providing more opportunities for them to understand fundamental values such as democracy, tolerance and the rule of law. You have tackled this by providing a high-quality programme of class, year group and whole-school assemblies, which address pertinent issues sensitively and coherently. As a result, pupils are forming a greater respect for the opinions of others and a deeper understanding of the value of equality. For example, pupils demonstrated their secure knowledge of the Suffragette movement and held the clear view that 'everything should be fair'.

During the last inspection, it was found that middle leaders were not contributing to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment effectively in their areas of responsibility. An external consultant has provided training for middle leaders, which has resulted in their having a clearer view of their roles. They now know how to go about using various sources of evidence to identify priorities for improvement in their subjects. They also have strategies for checking the impact of their actions. Through this professional development, leaders have rightly recognised that the wider curriculum subjects would benefit from some reorganisation. This work is planned for the autumn term. Therefore, middle leaders have not had an opportunity to put their new understanding into practice. You are clear that enabling middle leaders to improve the quality of teaching in wider curriculum subjects, so that all pupils receive work which challenges them, is a crucial priority for the next academic year.

Since the previous inspection, you have further developed systems to ensure that additional funding is spent effectively. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a firm understanding of the needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. She checks regularly on the quality of the provision that this group of pupils receives and gives advice to staff to strengthen this further. In collaboration with teachers and parents, she ensures that pupils have appropriate targets, which are reviewed frequently. Consequently, most pupils in this group are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Similarly, leaders track carefully how interventions and subsidised educational visits have an impact on disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment. Leaders recognise that disadvantaged pupils, along with their peers, have made variable progress over time. This is due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across school, which are now being addressed. Targeted interventions to address gaps in disadvantaged pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are supporting pupils to catch up more quickly.

The last inspection report recognised that trusting relationships needed to be built with a greater proportion of parents. To this end, you have increased the number of opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's education. For example, parents are invited to attend an increased number of workshops, events and performances. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were rehearsing for their end-of-year show, which they will perform at a local theatre, and Year 5 pupils were getting ready for their Eid celebration assembly. Leaders track parental attendance at events carefully and use this information to encourage groups of parents who are less likely to attend. Parents receive valuable information about their child's attainment and progress throughout the year, through three annual written reports and two parent consultation meetings. Regular newsletters also provide helpful messages about school events. These actions have been effective in gaining the trust and confidence of most parents. This was evidenced in your recent parental survey, which indicated that 91% of parents who responded would recommend the school to others. You are fully aware that there is more work to do to gain the confidence of a small but significant group of parents who feel that their views are not heard.

External support

Using an external consultant, you have secured appropriate support for middle leaders' development. Collaboration with the federated infant school has been valuable in sharing good practice and ensuring professional development for staff. You work effectively with the local authority and a local partnership of schools to improve aspects of teaching, learning and assessment, such as the moderation of assessments. The work of governors has been strengthened further through access to local authority professional development opportunities. In leading improvements, you have also made good use of the expertise which already exists within the school. For example, the specialist leader in education provides crucial support and guidance for staff and has been successful in improving the quality of mathematics teaching across school.

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

Yours sincerely

Karine Hendley

Her Majesty's Inspector