

16 July 2018

Mrs Nicky Wake
Acting Headteacher
Castle Primary School
Newlands Road
Keynsham
Bristol
BS31 2TS

Dear Mrs Wake

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Castle Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 July 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. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in April 2017, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors 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:

- Improve teaching and pupils' outcomes by:
 - swiftly ensuring that higher- and middle-ability pupils are well supported and challenged in lessons so that they make consistently good progress across the school
 - following up misconceptions in spelling and grammar in writing lessons.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - school leaders evaluate the school's new teaching approaches and that these

approaches are having a long-lasting impact on improving pupils' outcomes

- staff use new systems that support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities effectively to monitor pupils' learning and progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, pupils, the chair of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, the substantive headteacher for September 2018 and middle leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I went on a learning walk with you and the acting deputy headteacher to every class, where I looked at the work being done by pupils. I checked safeguarding documentation.

Context

You have been acting headteacher since September 2017 because there has been no substantive headteacher this academic year. The key stage 2 leader has been acting as your deputy headteacher. You managed a significant turnover of staff in September 2017, including nine new teachers of whom three were newly qualified. You have overseen the leadership of SEN since May and the early years since Easter, when staff resigned from these positions. A new chair of governors took up post in September 2017. A substantive headteacher has been appointed for September 2018, as well as a new SEN coordinator.

There is major building work at the school, which adds to the demands on your time. These include ensuring daily the health and safety of pupils and staff.

On the day of the inspection, Year 6 were on a transition day to local secondary schools.

Main findings

You and the acting deputy headteacher have managed the operational aspects of the school well. These have, for the past nine months, included dealing with constant change in staffing and leadership roles. However, your ability to make strategic changes and improve standards in key stages 1 and 2 is limited because of the many other pressing issues with which you have been dealing.

In September, when you took up your appointment, many pupils displayed challenging behaviour because they were unsettled by so many new staff in the school. You reorganised the behaviour management policy and clarified the procedures for teachers and teaching assistants to follow. As a result, pupils' behaviour has improved. The school is now a more orderly place and pupils are ready to learn.

You worked with the local authority and a neighbouring teaching school to improve

the teaching of phonics and mathematics because the results in both subjects were below the national average for the past two years. The phonics leader trained staff in Reception and Year 1 to use a new system in phonics, and a newly appointed leader has monitored the information well. Consequently, results for the screening check for pupils in Year 1 are closer to the national average this year. Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 have received daily support in phonics because their knowledge was very weak. There are improvements in this area, though reading and writing in key stages 1 and 2 are still not in line with national average.

The leader in mathematics, who took up her new role and post in school in September 2017, has worked with an external consultant throughout the year. As a result of this support and training of staff, pupils' fluency in calculation is improving. When teachers make practical resources available to pupils, the majority use them well to solve their calculations. You are aware that the 'practise, apply, deepen' methodology is working well for the first two aspects, but pupils do not have enough time to 'deepen' their learning. Teachers move on to new concepts too quickly and pupils do not have sufficient time to complete the more complex problems. Consequently, too few pupils achieve at the higher standard.

The new leader for English at key stage 2 has focused on improving reading because results in the end of key stage tests have been in the bottom 20% nationally for the past two years. You have bought several new reading books and the library is better stocked. Pupils are reading more frequently and their reading ages have improved by several months or, in some cases, over a year. As yet, pupils' ability to understand inferences has not improved, so results in reading tests at the end of key stages 1 and 2 have not improved.

You have appreciated the support of the new chair of governors. Her educational expertise has added capacity to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. She has undertaken a review of governance, overseen by the local authority. There is a clear action plan in place which governors check regularly at their meetings. Governors have a clearer understanding of their role and are more secure about the importance of challenging school leaders to make sure that pupils' progress improves.

You are aware that the school's assessment information is not yet reliable. Although leaders changed the systems and checked the information-gathering regularly, teachers' assessments are still not accurate. This is evidenced by the work in books. Consequently, leaders have not halted the decline in standards. Pupils are not helped to catch up immediately when they fall behind in their knowledge and understanding.

With the absence of the SEN coordinator, staff have received insufficient training on how to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, so pupils' progress is not yet good. The monitoring of progress for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is not effective because of the lack of reliable assessment information. You have managed education, health and care plans for pupils well. As a result, the most vulnerable

pupils receive the statutory support to which they are entitled.

Evaluation of changes to teaching systems is at an early stage and has not yet had sufficient impact on improving consistency in teaching. Consequently, higher- and middle-ability pupils are not making good progress. There has been a focus on phonics and reading, but pupils' misconceptions in grammar continue. There has been some improvement in spelling, but you are aware that this is not yet good enough.

Ofsted will carry out a further monitoring inspection and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority and the neighbouring teaching schools have provided effective support to the school in the past year, which has enabled incremental improvements in phonics, reading and mathematics. In addition, the governance review has led to a stronger governing body that understands its role and is acting upon this accordingly. In order to make the improvements recommended at the previous inspection, the support needs to continue and refocus on the specifics identified.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector