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Mr Anthony Cosans
Headteacher
Milton Court Primary Academy
Brewery Road
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Dear Mr Cosans

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Milton Court Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 18 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.

Senior leaders 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the regional director of the trust. I also met with members of the local governing body and had a separate meeting with the regional director and deputy regional director of the trust. A further meeting was held with you and the school's attendance officer. I evaluated the school's action plan and scrutinised other documents, including information about governance and pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance. You and I made short visits to four lessons to look at the impact of leaders' work to improve teaching. We also looked at a selection of pupils' work with the deputy headteacher and the regional director of the trust.

Context

The school's leadership has changed significantly since the last inspection. The executive headteacher role ended in the summer of 2017. You joined the school in November 2017. At that time, an acting headteacher was in place, who had previously been the head of school. He left at the end of the autumn term. Another senior leader also left, in November. You successfully recruited a deputy headteacher who joined the school in January 2018. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was on long-term sick leave and left in January. A new SENCo took up post in February. In the intervening period, a SENCo from another school within the trust carried out the role, supported by the trust's deputy regional director. Trust leadership has also changed. The regional director took up his post in the summer of 2017. There has been notable staff turnover. A further five teachers are leaving this summer. You have successfully recruited five experienced teachers to replace them.

Main findings

The trust has acted wisely over the last year. Recognising that progress was stalling after the last inspection, trust leaders made the bold decision to change the school's leadership arrangements. This has created the capacity needed to move the school forward. Since taking up post, you have ensured a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour. You have set clear and consistently high expectations for staff and pupils. Helpful training and support for staff, coupled with tighter performance management arrangements, have brought improvements in pupils' achievement and behaviour. You acted swiftly to improve arrangements for teaching phonics. Outcomes have improved dramatically. Four in every five pupils in Year 1 reached the expected standard in the national phonics screening check this summer. Fewer than two out of every five Year 1 pupils reached the standard in 2017. Leaders' have introduced of a new assessment tool. This has helped reveal the gaps in Year 6 pupils' English and mathematical skills and knowledge that had arisen from a legacy of underachievement. This has enabled teaching to focus sharply and effectively on filling these gaps. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics has risen notably. Your plan to spread this approach across the school is well considered. However, it is not clear how information from teachers' assessments and the commercial tests used by the school will be pulled together to give an incisive view of each pupil's progress. You and trust leaders acknowledge that this issue needs further thought.

Pupils' attendance has improved notably. In 2017, almost one pupil in four had low attendance. In the current year, this figure has been halved and attendance is continuing to improve. Clear communication with parents and carers about the importance of good attendance and the consequences of poor attendance is helping. Parents know that the school will act when pupils are absent without good reason. Suitable support for pupils and their families as well as an increased focus

on rewards for good attendance also contribute. Pupils' behaviour has also improved. Incidents of poor behaviour have reduced considerably. Levels of fixed-term exclusion are down by two thirds. A more consistent approach to managing behaviour is helping to ensure that pupils behave well in class.

Leaders' approach to checking the quality of teaching is rigorous. You have an incisive understanding of what is working well and where further improvement is needed. For example, your scrutiny of pupils' work shows you that although the teaching of writing and mathematics has steadily improved in some classes, in others, teaching remains inconsistent. You have developed a helpful school improvement plan sharply focused on the core issues that need tackling. Leaders are implementing the plan effectively. Encouragingly, the plan pays attention to developing the whole curriculum, not just English and mathematics. You have high hopes for next term and spoke with enthusiasm of the skill and experience of the teachers you have recruited for September. You and the trust know that it is crucial that the new staff group can 'hit the ground running'. The leadership approaches now in place and your comprehensive plans for further training mean that you are well placed to secure swift further improvements.

External support

The trust has worked effectively with school leaders to provide a wide range of support that has helped improve the school. For example, specialists in English and mathematics have worked with leaders and staff to improve teaching and the accuracy of assessment in these subjects. Leaders taking on safeguarding responsibilities have been suitably trained. The local authority specialist teaching service has helped teaching and support staff to develop their approach to meeting the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Regular reviews by the trust and external consultants have helped leaders verify their self-evaluation. Plans to make use of specialists from the local teaching school alliance to support further development of teaching next term are well considered.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the REAch2 multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton

Ofsted Inspector