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Mrs Banks
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Banks

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Flash Ley Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 November 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 strong progress being made in reading, writing and mathematics in some classes is made in all classes.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, other leaders and two members of the governing body. I also met with the commissioning manager for the local authority improvement service to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met informally with parents at the start of the day and a group of key stage 2 pupils. I carried out a learning walk with you and I looked at pupils' work. I reviewed a range of documents and records, including leaders' action plans, the school's self-evaluation summary, the outcome of monitoring activities and pupils' assessment information.

Context

The school had very recently reopened at the time of the last inspection in March 2017, following problems with the building on the site. Pupils and staff were away from the school site for far longer than had been anticipated. Several teachers and many pupils chose not to return to the school when it reopened because of the disruption that this unavoidable situation had caused. In addition, resources used to support learning, including topic and reading books, were lost or damaged. You took up the post of headteacher in September 2017, and, together with the staff, have worked hard to ensure that returning pupils settled well into the school.

Main findings

Since your appointment as headteacher, you have taken effective action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement. You and your leaders make a strong team. Governors make a positive contribution to improving the quality of education at the school. This is because they provide a suitable balance of challenge and support that holds leaders to account for the work that they do. Staff morale is high because teachers and teaching assistants feel valued. They appreciate the professional development and new opportunities that you provide. Staff share your commitment to becoming a good school. The parents I spoke to at the start of the inspection are positive about the work of the school. They told me that their children are happy to come to school, where they make good progress.

The school's plans for improvement contain relevant actions, specific targets and set timescales. Leaders review their actions regularly to assess the effect of new initiatives and, when needed, plans are adapted. For example, subject leaders update their action plans after half-termly checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Action plans could be strengthened further by ensuring that governor involvement in the evaluation of their impact on pupils' progress is more explicit.

Leaders have ensured that teachers have much higher expectations of what pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, can do. Teachers plan lessons that reflect what must be taught in each year group, and they have a secure understanding of what pupils should achieve by the end of the year. You ensure that half-termly pupil progress meetings are rigorous and that interventions are put swiftly in place to support any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. The school's assessment information shows that the proportion of pupils working at the standards typical for their age in reading, writing and mathematics has significantly improved over the last academic year. In some year groups, pupils are making strong progress in a variety of subjects. This is because work is well matched to pupils' needs, and they are moved on quickly. However, this is not happening as well in all year groups, and there is more work to be done so that pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is the same across the school.

The school's plans to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils are detailed

and reflect the specific barriers that pupils experience. You ensure that all staff have high expectations of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the school's assessment information shows that in several year groups the difference between disadvantaged and other pupils is reducing. Leaders and teachers work together to put further interventions in place where these differences are not reducing.

You have taken swift action to improve teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics. Pupils learn calculation strategies, which they use to apply to problems in a wide variety of mathematical topics. Lessons are organised so that pupils have opportunities to develop fluency, solve problems and to explain what they have done using mathematical vocabulary. As a result, pupils are developing good mathematical reasoning skills. Pupils' books in Years 4, 5 and 6 demonstrate that the level of challenge for all pupils, including the most able, is appropriate. In other year groups, the level of challenge for the most able pupils is not as clear. You have plans to provide additional training for teachers who need more support to ensure that the level of challenge is sufficient for all pupils.

Leaders have replenished the library with a wide range of texts that are for reading pleasure, and also to support topics across the curriculum. In addition, plenty of new, high-interest reading books have been purchased for all year groups. Pupils told me that they have daily opportunities to read and that many are heard read by an adult up to three times each week. Teachers ensure that both fiction and non-fiction texts are at the centre of the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 1 were writing descriptive sentences about ice, after reading 'Tango Makes Three', and, in Year 3, pupils were finding out about the animals who inhabited the earth during the stone age while reading 'Stone Age Boy'. Parents told me that they have noticed that reading is a priority of the school, and they are pleased with the wide range of books that their children bring home.

Governors have an accurate overview of the education that the school provides. They have benefited from training provided through the local authority and through changes you have made to how they are involved in the school. Governors use the regular information that they receive about pupils' progress and leaders' reports on the quality of teaching to ask incisive questions of you and your leadership team. Each governor is linked to a class and a subject. Governors are proud to be part of the school and are committed to improving outcomes for all pupils.

External support

Leaders make effective use of external support to help them address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The local authority has commissioned support that includes half-termly monitoring visits from an education consultant, training for staff and subject leaders that is linked to English and mathematics, and training for support staff on effective questioning. In addition, you have organised external support to provide professional development for middle leaders, and to ensure that pupil premium funding is being used effectively.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jo Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector