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11 January 2019

Paul Frith
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Dear Paul Frith

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Eastbrook School

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 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:

- raise the attendance and reduce the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils
- ensure that effective teaching in the primary school plugs the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills in mathematics
- improve the outdoor area in the early years setting so that it becomes an effective learning environment for all children
- ensure that middle leaders are consistently effective in using assessment information to evaluate the impact of their actions to raise pupils' achievement.

Evidence

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, the executive headteacher and your senior leaders. I met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also met with the local authority's head of school effectiveness and

partnerships, and Barking and Dagenham's school improvement partner for the primary section. These meetings focused on the actions taken since the last inspection and plans for future school improvement. Inspectors met with two groups of teachers, comprised of primary and secondary staff, which included a few of the middle leaders. They analysed a range of information provided by your leaders around behaviour and attendance and pupils' achievement. Inspectors spoke to two groups of pupils formally at lunchtime and observed their conduct as they moved around the school site. They evaluated a range of pupils' work mainly in lessons, followed by discussions with senior leaders. Inspectors visited lessons jointly with your leaders, to evaluate pupils' attitudes to learning and their progress. One inspector scrutinised the school's checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school and visited your primary school site and early years provision.

Context

The previous headteacher, who had been in post for 11 years, retired in August 2018. An acting headteacher, who was the previous substantive deputy headteacher, has been leading the secondary school since September 2018. The governors also appointed an executive headteacher at the start of the current academic year, who works across the all-through school for three days a week. A new head of primary also commenced post in September 2018.

Main findings

School improvement took a turn for the worse soon after the previous inspection in January 2018. For example, pupils' behaviour became worse in the secondary school and pupils' progress in the primary phase was affected by too many changes in staffing. As a result, in 2018, many pupils underachieved across the curriculum in all key stages. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Since September 2018, you and the executive headteacher, your senior leaders and the governing body have worked relentlessly to sustain school improvements. You have an accurate understanding of what you still need to address and detailed plans in place to achieve this. You benefit from a stable and competent leadership team who support whole-heartedly the changes you have already initiated. Consequently, you are beginning to see the impact of your actions to date in key areas such as pupils' behaviour, achievement and improved attendance.

The governing body has worked closely with the local authority to secure effective leadership in both the primary and secondary sections of the school. After a period of turbulence, the school is now on an even keel; consequently, the governing body is able to hold school leaders to account more effectively. Governors are very aware of the scale of the task ahead and their pivotal role in ensuring that improvements are rapid and sustainable. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in line with statutory requirements, and have secured additional funding to improve the quality of provision in the primary school.

You have made your expectations very clear about what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour around the school has improved significantly due to consistent implementation of the behaviour policy by staff. Indeed, inspectors saw the positive impact of this on pupils' good attitudes to learning in lessons and the way they show respect for one another as they move around the school.

Teachers generally work well in their teams to plan interesting activities that engage pupils in their learning. Each subject has developed clear systems for informing pupils about how their work will be assessed, the knowledge and skills that they already have and what they need to do to improve. There was clear evidence in pupils' work of an ongoing dialogue between the teacher and pupil, which enabled pupils to make improvements to their work. You ensure that teachers have comprehensive information about the pupils that they teach, and this is used to adapt lesson time to meet particular needs.

Senior leaders carefully track the progress pupils make and there are a range of interventions in place to support those at risk of falling behind. Leaders are skilful at using assessment information to evaluate the impact of their actions. For example, all higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 have been assigned a senior leader as mentor to advise and guide them. Performance against their aspirational targets is closely monitored; it shows that a higher proportion of these pupils are making stronger progress this year compared to pupils with a similar starting point in the previous year. Middle leaders, on the other hand, are not consistently effective at using assessment information to target specific weaknesses in provision. You are clear about this variability and know which subjects need further targeted coaching and support.

You are clear that some groups of pupils have historically not made the progress of which they are capable. In particular, you are focusing on the progress made by White British, disadvantaged pupils. You have produced a detailed strategy to accelerate the progress made by disadvantaged pupils so that they can catch up with all pupils' progress nationally. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of your work; for example, the attendance and persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils has improved only marginally. You are clear about the strong correlation between pupils' attendance and good achievement; you have rightly prioritised this as a key area for further improvement.

The early years and primary phase continue to receive quality support from the local authority and a local primary school. As a result, teaching has improved and the assessment of pupils' achievement is accurate. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they are making stronger progress than previously in English and mathematics, for example in developing their writing skills and use of number. That said, children's learning opportunities in the outdoor area are currently limited. Consequently, children do not make the maximum progress in their personal, social and physical development. Many pupils in the primary phase have gaps in their knowledge and skills in mathematics due

to the legacy of weak teaching in the past. Primary leaders are aware and have suitable plans in place to plug these gaps through the provision of a well-sequenced curriculum.

External support

You and your team benefit from a wide range of support. The local authority has been instrumental in brokering effective support from Leys Primary School. This focuses on leadership guidance and practical on-site support for staff. More recently, leadership support has also been commissioned from All Saints secondary school, which is part of a local teaching school alliance. This includes working with teachers and leaders in targeted departments to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and raise pupils' achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Nasim Butt
Her Majesty's Inspector