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Ms Kirsty Nichols-Mackay
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Nichols-Mackay

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Monkseaton Middle School

Following my visit to your school on 31 January 2019, 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 last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the quality of teaching of English and pupils' outcomes by ensuring that the recently reconstituted English leadership team promptly delivers the school's plans, including collaborating with other successful schools
- successfully implement the school's pupil premium strategy so that the differences between disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and the outcomes of other pupils nationally diminish.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the assistant headteacher and the head of department for mathematics. I met with two senior local authority school improvement advisers. Two governors, including the chair of the governing body, provided me with further information about the school's development. I evaluated the school action plan and considered your self-evaluation document. I scrutinised your pupil premium strategy and the review of your spending of pupil premium funding. Together, we visited eight lessons across a range of subjects and year groups in school. I reviewed your analysis of pupil progress information for all year groups. Together, we sampled Year 6 pupils' work in their English books. I reviewed your records of the safeguarding checks that you complete for staff, governors and volunteers in school.

Context

Since the last inspection you have been appointed as headteacher, moving from your role at the previous inspection when you were acting head of school. A deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have been appointed. Along with these appointments, three teachers have also been appointed.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, you have sustained the work to improve the school in a well-focused and determined fashion. For example, you have continued to strengthen the quality of teaching and to secure appropriate well-targeted professional development for teachers. Along with governors, you have made changes to the school's leadership to strengthen the capacity for improvement. You and your leaders have set out a clear route to address the areas identified at the previous inspection. Your direction for improvement is well understood by staff. As a result, improvements are emerging, for example in the teaching of mathematics and pupils' behaviour across school. However, the improvements in English have not been as prompt and your school's pupil progress information shows the need to improve pupils' outcomes further, particularly those of disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders are outward looking and seek to identify practice and training which will improve the school. The school is involved in a wide range of initiatives and partnerships with other schools to improve the quality of teaching and leadership. You have planned these to carefully match the school's priorities and selected staff who will benefit from specific training opportunities. You and your leaders check for a positive effect of these actions on the quality of teaching. Governors are supportive of these initiatives, while at the same time providing leaders with appropriate challenge to ensure that the resources required are having the intended impact.

Some middle leaders are benefiting from training and this is improving their skills and their effect on improving the quality of teaching. For example, the head of department for mathematics has revised the mathematics planning and introduced new approaches to the teaching of mathematics, such as the teaching of problem-solving and reasoning. During our visits to mathematics lessons it was evident that this work was beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' engagement and learning over time. This head of department is now checking more regularly to ensure that improvements are being embedded consistently by all department staff.

Leaders have taken some actions to improve pupils' interest in reading. For example, the revamped library, with improved reading stock and quiet areas, provides a well-organised, calm, comfortable area to motivate pupils to read. The introduction of a structured reading scheme with regular online quizzes is raising the profile of reading around school. However, due to some staffing and leadership turbulence in the English department, actions to bring improvements in the teaching of this subject have been slow to start. There is a clear plan to accelerate improvements in place. Part of the plan is for the assistant headteacher to provide additional leadership capacity to the English department. This will also be supported with training and expertise from schools where the teaching of English is strong. As this work is a recent development it is not possible to determine the effect on the quality of teaching or pupils' outcomes in English.

A new approach to behaviour management is in place and this system is on display consistently in classrooms. The focus on rewarding pupils for meeting expectations and a structured approach to consequences is beginning to bear fruit. Pupils behaved well in classrooms during the inspection. They moved promptly to lessons in a sensible fashion. Teachers provided praise for meeting expectations and relationships between pupils and staff, and pupils and their peers, were positive. In a small number of the books sampled pupils' presentation did not demonstrate pride in their work.

Governors have put in place useful systems for holding leaders to account. Regular 'raising achievement' group meetings are attended by the chair of the governing body, who is a national leader for governance. Governors have received training to increase their understanding of pupil progress and attainment information. These approaches enable governors to have a strong understanding of the school's priorities and the impact of leaders' actions. Governors have made effective strategic decisions in relation to increasing leadership capacity and improving the quality of teaching. This is having a positive impact on leadership effectiveness and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school.

Leaders' self-evaluation is detailed and draws on a range of evidence to identify strengths and priorities. You have created a well-thought-through school improvement plan which focuses sharply on what needs to improve. School systems are in place for checking the impact of leaders' actions. You also draw on the evaluations of local authority advisers to gain an external view of the school's

progress towards addressing your improvement priorities. The reading support plan is relatively new, and leaders accept that this requires prompt implementation.

An external pupil premium review has been completed in a timely fashion and an appropriate plan is in place to improve disadvantaged pupils' personal development and academic outcomes. However, leaders' analysis of the school's pupil progress information shows that there is still more to do here to diminish the differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Furthermore, sampling of pupils' work shows that while there is some emerging evidence of improvements in these pupils' work, there remains some variability across the school.

External support

The school has drawn effectively on a range of support from the local authority and other successful schools. This has included working with two national leaders of education and a specialist leader of education. This support has had a positive effect on the quality of teaching in mathematics, where there has been a more stable staffing situation. The effect has not been as strong in the teaching of English.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Reeves
Her Majesty's Inspector