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Mr Harmander Dhanjal
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Dear Mr Dhanjal

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Nishkam Primary School Wolverhampton

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 recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, with the chair of the local governing body and with a representative of the Nishkam School Trust (NST) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan along with documentation about the external reviews of governance and how the pupil premium funding is used. I also evaluated minutes of the local governing board meetings.

I undertook a learning walk with the assistant headteacher and carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work in their English books along with two members of the leadership team. We discussed your records on the checks of the quality of teaching and information relating to pupils' progress. I met informally with parents and carers at the start of the day and with a group of key stage 2 pupils to discuss their

reading.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the school's leadership team. You have expanded the senior team to include a deputy headteacher and have introduced a middle leadership team that consists of English and mathematics subject leaders and the coordinator for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In addition, you have appointed several new teachers. This is because some teachers have left and because the school is growing in size and, since September 2018, now includes Year 5 for the first time. Five new members have strengthened the local governing board. There is a new system of induction for governors, which provides training to ensure that they understand the requirements of the role.

Main findings

You and the leadership team demonstrate the necessary determination to bring about improvement. Leaders ensure that all pupils have a positive experience at the school, with equal importance given to pupils' academic and personal development. You have strengthened the leadership team and careful consideration has been given to areas of responsibility. As a result, leaders are clear about their roles and are able to make a difference to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. You have eradicated poor teaching and now have a full complement of permanent teaching staff that share your commitment to further improvement. The parents I spoke to at the start of the inspection are positive about the work of the school. They all agreed that their children are happy to come to school and several said that they felt the school had improved since the last inspection.

The school's plans for improvement show that leaders understand fully the main areas for improvement. The plans also reflect the wider priorities for the school. For example, you have plans to further develop the curriculum and to review teaching for pupils with SEND. You ensure that the plans include measurable targets which help governors to make regular checks on the effectiveness of leaders' work.

Leaders have implemented a rigorous plan to check the quality of teaching and learning. Senior and middle leaders conduct lesson observations and learning walks. They scrutinise pupils' work and talk to pupils about what they are learning. As a result, leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching in the school. The information gained from these activities is used to plan appropriate training for all staff, for specified groups of staff and for personalised one-to-one support. Leaders provide detailed feedback to teachers and support staff about what they do well and what needs further improvement. All staff benefit from this highly focused coaching, which has led to marked improvements in the overall quality of teaching.

Leaders were asked at the previous inspection to improve the quality of teaching of

reading and writing. You have successfully raised teachers' expectations of what all pupils can achieve. This is particularly evident through pupils' understanding and use of language features and subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils write often in English lessons, with tasks linked to whole-class texts and to the topics they are learning. You have plans to ensure that all pupils regularly practise their writing skills across all subjects. Teachers plan tasks that are suitably challenging for the most able pupils but, too often, these pupils are held back from progressing with an activity while they wait for others to catch up. This prevents the most able pupils from making the progress they need to reach the standard of which they are capable.

Teachers accurately identify pupils' mistakes and misconceptions during discussions and through written feedback. Pupils practise refining their spelling and use of punctuation and grammar. The majority of pupils in each year group are writing at a standard typical for their age. However, some pupils do not apply their knowledge when they write independently, and they continue to make repeated errors. Most teachers have a high expectation of how pupils will present their work. There have been significant improvements in pupils' handwriting and presentation but some weaknesses in the teaching of writing remain across the school. You have recently introduced a writing guide for pupils that includes non-negotiable rules relating to presentation, and leaders check that teachers are implementing this as part of their half-termly scrutiny of pupils' work.

You have successfully raised the profile of reading throughout the school. You ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of texts that they are encouraged to read at school and at home. During the inspection, I met with some of the most able readers in the school, who shared details about the books they have read and justified why they preferred a particular author. In weekly reading lessons, teachers successfully focus on developing pupils' comprehension skills. Pupils respond well to a wide range of high-quality texts. Teachers use questions well to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged effectively.

At the time of the last inspection, you had recently introduced a new assessment system. This is now well embedded throughout the school. You ensure that teachers have a thorough knowledge of the typical age-related standards for the year group and key stage they teach. Using this knowledge, teachers are able to make accurate assessments of what pupils can do. Leaders conduct termly pupil progress meetings and half-termly 'check-ups' to ensure that no pupils are at risk of falling behind. During the meetings, leaders discuss the progress of individual pupils and look at examples of work in their books.

You ensure that all teachers, throughout the year, moderate their assessments of pupils' work with colleagues in the school, within the trust and with a group of local schools. Moderation records show that the assessment of pupils' outcomes is now accurate.

Following the external review of the use of the pupil premium funding that took

place after the inspection, leaders have a sound understanding of the barriers faced by the disadvantaged pupils at the school. They have ensured that this additional funding now has an effective impact on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Your plans for the use of the pupil premium funding are detailed and relate to specific year groups and subjects. You monitor the effectiveness of the actions carefully. You have successfully improved the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, with a significant reduction in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school. Assessment information about current pupils shows that, in most year groups, disadvantaged pupils now make similar rates of progress to those of other pupils. Governors challenge leaders more effectively about the use of additional funding, particularly the pupil premium funding and additional funding for pupils with SEND. They are able to measure the effectiveness of leaders' use of funding through the termly reports they receive. Governors ensure that there is a plan in place for the use of the physical education and sport premium funding but they are less able to explain the impact of this money on pupils' development.

The chair of the local governing board commissioned an external review of governance immediately after the inspection. The review provided an accurate analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the governing body's effectiveness. Governors have been proactive in their response to this review and have made several changes. For example, there are now named governors with specific responsibility for the pupil premium spending and for the funding for pupils with SEND, who have been trained to understand what this funding should be used for and how to monitor its effectiveness. All governors have a link role with a specific subject or year group and each member makes a termly visit to the school to work with a designated leader to find out about teaching and pupils' progress in their area of leadership.

External support

Leaders make effective use of a range of external support. For example, senior leaders have completed two programmes funded by the Department for Education: one about improving the quality of teaching and one about early language acquisition. Leaders at all levels benefit from working alongside colleagues from partner schools within NST, for example to enable external validation of assessment information and to improve the quality of teaching and learning in a range of subjects. Leaders have also received training from the local authority in supporting pupils who speak English as an additional language. This has had a direct impact on the assessment of these pupils and the range of interventions to support this group to make good progress.

Leaders have recently secured funding for support from a teaching school within the local authority. The focus of this support will be on the quality of teaching of reading and writing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the executive board and the chief executive

officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jo Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector