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Mr Nick Toyne
Devonshire Primary Academy
Devonshire Road
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Dear Mr Toyne

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Devonshire Primary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 12 February 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 academy 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 academy to become good.

The academy should take further action to:

- continue to improve outcomes for pupils
- improve consistency in standards of presentation and handwriting
- fill the vacancies on the governing body in order to broaden the skills with which governors challenge senior leaders.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders. I met with five subject leaders and three members of the governing body. I held a telephone conversation with the chief executive officer and one member of the

board of trustees. I met with a representative of the local authority.

You accompanied me on a series of short visits to classes in each year group. I looked at examples of pupils' books and the school's assessment information. I spoke to pupils about their work in the classes we visited. I met with the school business manager and viewed records of safeguarding. I scrutinised the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation.

Context

Since the previous inspection, three teachers have left, and one has joined the school. You have redistributed the roles of your senior and middle leaders to meet the needs of the pupils better. There are currently three vacancies on the governing body.

Main findings

Your focused leadership has drawn together a staff team whose members are determined to move this school from requires improvement to good. You, along with the senior leaders and governors, have an accurate view of the school's current strengths and where improvements are yet to be made. However, as you do not have a full complement of governors, this somewhat limits their range of expertise. The school development plan accurately identifies actions to continue to improve the school. Staff morale is high.

At the previous inspection, the inspectors judged leadership and the personal behaviour, development and welfare of the pupils as good. However, the inspectors left you with several areas to improve before the school's next section 5 inspection.

You have improved the quality of teaching and current school assessment data, and work in pupils' books indicates that outcomes across the school are beginning to improve. However, published performance data for pupils leaving key stage 1 in 2018 indicates a decline in reading and mathematics attainment. Pupils who left key stage 2 in 2018 had higher attainment in writing and mathematics than pupils in 2017. The proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who achieved the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics rose.

You have carefully restructured the way that you collect assessment data to let you better understand the progress that individual pupils make across the curriculum. Levels of pupils' mobility continue to be high within the school. For example, 36 pupils have joined the school this academic year and a further 30 pupils have left the school. Despite these improvements, published performance information indicates that pupils continue to attain at a lower level than other pupils nationally.

You, along with the governors, were disappointed in the poor results of the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2018. You have refocused your attention on this area,

ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is of a high standard. You have ensured that staff in key stage 1 have received up-to-date training in phonics. The leader for phonics makes regular checks on the teaching of phonics sessions, ensuring that they are high quality. From looking at samples of pupils' work and viewing examples of assessment information, I could see that many pupils in Year 1 are making good progress in learning phonics.

You have worked alongside the deputy headteacher to enhance and develop the roles of subject leaders. These leaders now make better checks on the progression of pupils' skills and knowledge in different curriculum areas. They check in pupils' books that the curriculum is covered in sufficient depth.

You have implemented a new approach to planning and the delivery of the curriculum to capture pupils' interest. You ensure that the curriculum is enriched with valuable life experiences. Activities include many trips away from school and visitors to the school. You monitor this well by regularly gathering the pupils' views of their learning. From looking at examples of pupils' work from across a range of subjects, I found examples of a wide and exciting curriculum. Pupils learn about interesting topics that inspire them to enjoy their learning. However, I did note that there was an inconsistent approach to expected standards of handwriting and presentation from different teachers.

Subject leaders' roles are developing well. Each subject leader receives a thorough induction to their new role. Newer subject leaders benefit from working alongside more experienced colleagues, both from within school and from other schools in the trust. More experienced leaders benefit from engaging in further professional development activities by gaining nationally accredited qualifications. Each subject leader has created an action plan for their subject areas that is closely aligned to the priorities on the school development plan. As a result, outcomes are improving for pupils across the school.

The early years is a vibrant and creative learning environment. Since the previous inspection, you have invested heavily in developing the outside learning space. Opportunities for pupils to climb, investigate and develop their motor skills and manage their own risks are now evident. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes work with increasing levels of independence and resilience. There is now greater consistency of approaches across the early years.

You have also invested heavily in staffing across the early years to ensure that you meet the varied needs of the children. Skilled staff are aware of children's individual needs. Adults engage with the children in a purposeful manner, working to develop their speaking and listening skills through role-play and regular story-telling. Children apply good levels of concentration and persevere with their learning challenges. At the previous inspection, the Nursery and Reception classes were taught as separate classes. You have restructured the organisation of the early years to streamline the availability of resources. You have now chosen to work with

all the children in one large learning environment that provides children with high-quality resources and activities to ignite their curiosity. You have enhanced your communication with parents and carers since the previous inspection. Across the early years, adults make careful observations about children's learning. This information is routinely shared with parents to enable them to better support their children with their learning at home.

Published data indicates that the proportion of children leaving the early years with a good level of development has been lower than the national average for several years. However, careful planning and effective use of assessment information ensure that the needs of children are met across the early years. Despite starting school with skills lower than is typical across the country, children, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress during their time in the early years.

External support

The school benefits from effective support from a local outstanding primary school and other schools within the trust. Close links have been forged with a local teaching school alliance. The school continues to work with the local authority assessment and moderation team. Support in the continued development of reading is provided by a local English hub within the town. The school benefits from attendance at regular cluster meetings to provide peer support and challenge in different aspects of work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Blackpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Donald
Her Majesty's Inspector