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Mrs Diane Wakefield
Hawthorn Primary School
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Dear Mrs Wakefield

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hawthorn Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 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 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are not 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:

- more quickly address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection relating to:
 - improving the quality of teaching in key stages 1 and 2 so that all groups of pupils make at least good progress
 - making sure that checks on the quality of teaching and school improvement plans are more sharply focused on improving the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and four members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A meeting also took place with two representatives of the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan and spent time reviewing school documentation relating to: pupil assessment information; monitoring of teaching and learning; governance; and external reports. I observed teaching and learning with you and I listened to pupils read and scrutinised their work. I also reviewed the checks that are made on the suitability of adults to work with children.

Context

Staffing has remained very stable since the last inspection. There are no changes in leadership positions. A newly qualified teacher is currently covering for a teacher who is on maternity leave.

Main findings

Leaders' actions have been slow to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Despite the support provided by the local authority and leaders' new initiatives, not enough progress has been made. Pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2 in 2018 was in the lowest 10% nationally for reading and mathematics and in the lowest 20% for writing. Pupils' attainment was also below the national average with just over half the pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined.

The school's strong early years provision has been maintained. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development continued to improve and was above the national average in 2018. However, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check dropped to below average in 2018. Less than half of boys and just over half of disadvantaged pupils met the standard. You are aware that this represents weak progress for this cohort of pupils based on their starting points at the end of early years. While you acknowledge that this group of pupils did not receive strong enough teaching, leaders' actions were not successful in mitigating the impact on pupils' outcomes. Additionally, the school's assessment information and work in books confirm that this year group are not catching up quickly in Year 2.

Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2018 continued to be in line with the national average in reading and was below the national average for writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress has not been built on sufficiently as this cohort have entered Year 3. Similarly, other cohorts in key stage 2 are not making enough progress based on their starting points.

You are aware that teachers need to have higher expectations of what pupils can

and should achieve. Work has begun to enable this. Following the last inspection, immediate action was taken to set high expectations for the presentation of pupils' work in their books. Books now contain the school's agreed requirements for pupils and staff to refer to. This has been successful in improving the way pupils present their work. However, teachers' accuracy and use of assessment, at the point of learning, is not as successful at improving the quality of pupils' work to further support their progress.

Leaders have introduced some new systems and routines to improve teaching and learning. These new approaches are starting to raise the expectations of staff and increase their accountability for pupils' outcomes. For example, a newly structured timetable is ensuring that English and mathematics teaching happens each morning. You have also adjusted the grouping arrangements for pupils so that pupils have greater continuity in their learning. While these new approaches are bringing greater consistency throughout the school and are assisting with raised expectations, actions are not focused enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.

Leaders do not have well-developed systems for recording their checks on the quality of teaching and learning. There is not a systematic approach to the checks they make or a clear way of recording their findings to contribute to further school improvement. Monitoring activities are not focused primarily on determining the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Instead, they concentrate too often on compliance. This is contributing to leaders' overly positive view about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Leaders' school development plans, while targeted at improving pupils' outcomes, do not consider how these actions will be realised by improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching. This is because leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are not precisely identifying the aspects of teaching which require improvement. Too many actions are related to intervention for pupils who are not on track, rather than improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching for all pupils. Additionally, when checking the impact of school improvement actions, you have evaluated that nearly all of the milestones have been reached at this point in the plan. This is because many of the milestones are about completion of actions, rather than their impact on pupils' outcomes. As a result, leaders and governors have an unrealistic view of the extent of the improvements made.

Governors are beginning to become more involved in checking for themselves the impact of leaders' actions through their visits to school. Leaders are starting to provide more information for governors about their specific areas of responsibility, in the form of a termly report. However, the reports are not always tightly linked to pupils' outcomes and the impact of school improvement actions. Similarly, your headteacher's report does not provide governors with pertinent information about pupils' outcomes. Consequently, governors do not always have the information they need to provide appropriate challenge. They are unaware of some of the significant

weaknesses in pupils' outcomes. Governors take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously though and have made sure the area for improvement about safeguarding has been addressed. They make regular checks on recruitment procedures and make sure that staff have up-to-date training to help them identify and respond to any signs of concern.

Leadership of phonics has, rightly, identified where higher expectations have been needed. Adaptations to planning, support for staff and regular assessments are making sure that more pupils are keeping up with the school's phonics programme this year. You still recognise that reading needs to be a focus of forthcoming school improvement work, but this has not begun at present. In the early stages of learning to read, books are not well matched to pupils' developing phonics knowledge. Some of the words contained in these books include sounds they have not learned or common exception words they have not been introduced to. This means they are not able to read with accuracy and sometimes revert to using clues in the pictures to help them, rather than the decoding strategies they have been taught. Pupils who are behind with their reading are not always receiving support from staff with the greatest expertise. Additionally, pupils are not routinely rereading books in the early stages of reading to help them develop confidence and fluency.

Leaders have prioritised pupils' love of reading. High-quality texts have been purchased and are displayed prominently throughout the school. This results in pupils accessing age-appropriate reading material. By studying key texts, which are central to some of their English units of work, pupils are developing an interest in a wide range of texts.

In pupils' writing, greater attention is being paid to handwriting and spelling. There are also more frequent opportunities to write for a range of purposes across the curriculum. Additionally, leaders have introduced success criteria to writing lessons. This is supporting pupils in being more aware of what they are learning and how to improve their work. In mathematics, teachers are now starting to routinely identify when pupils have not grasped their learning. Additional support is put in place as soon as possible to give them more practice. As many of these approaches are very new, and are yet to become embedded, they are not having the desired impact on pupils' outcomes as present.

External support

The local authority is aware of the improvements which are needed and has put support in place to enable this. Support has been welcomed by leaders, who are keen to make the necessary improvements. While there has been a wide range of support provided, the impact of this has been limited. Support has not been effective in sharpening leaders' action plans or checks on the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector