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Mrs Vikki Garratt
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Garratt

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Meynell Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 March 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 the trust 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:

- ensure that all incidents of name-calling are reported so that staff can deal with them effectively
- reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the executive headteacher, a representative of the local authority, members of the local governing board and a range of other senior and middle leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and spent time reviewing school documentation relating to: the pupil premium strategy; parental engagement; inclusion; pupil assessment information; and attendance. I observed teaching and learning with you and assistant headteachers. I spoke to pupils and scrutinised work with senior and middle leaders. I also reviewed the checks that are made on the suitability of adults to work with children.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been several staffing changes. Existing staff members have been appointed to the posts of senior behaviour coordinator and senior inclusion lead with a responsibility for attendance. You also took the decision to appoint a second coordinator for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) from within school. There are three newly qualified teachers and three in their second year of teaching. You have taken on the responsibilities of an assistant headteacher who is on maternity leave. Another assistant headteacher left the school in August 2018 and will be replaced in April 2019.

Main findings

You are a highly dedicated headteacher and are uncompromising in your desire to support the pupils in your care to succeed. With support from the executive headteacher, you have created a positive learning culture. Staff morale is high and there is a renewed determination to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

You and your team have worked together to improve teaching and learning across the school. These actions had a dramatic effect on attainment at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards increased: in reading by 32%; in writing by 6% and in mathematics by 37% when compared to the previous year. Progress in all three subjects rose to average.

Your self-evaluation is thorough and has been carefully used to identify priorities for improvement. These priorities are addressed in a clear improvement plan which is evaluated each term. This plan includes a useful summary of the current position and lists of questions to support governors to provide challenge. Actions to drive forward improvement and monitoring arrangements are clear. However, the criteria on which success will be evaluated are qualitative rather than quantitative. This means that governors cannot easily check the effect of actions taken.

At the last inspection, you were asked to iron out the remaining inconsistencies in

the quality of teaching. This work has taken on increased impetus in this academic year. Recent training for middle leaders has given them the expertise and confidence to spread good practice across the school. Work in pupils' books shows that there is a consistent approach to teaching and learning. This is especially evident in English and mathematics. School policies are followed and sequences of learning clearly build on pupils' prior knowledge, skills and understanding. Staff are united in their desire to continually improve the quality of teaching to ensure that pupils' outcomes continue to improve. Regular in-house training is used to support this aim. There are high expectations for all pupils. Pupils' progress is carefully checked and additional support is put in place when appropriate. However, recent staffing changes mean that not all school strategies are fully embedded. Work has begun to address the existing variability in the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation.

The last inspection report also challenged you to make sure that staff consistently use spoken and written standard English. This was intended to make sure that all adults provide pupils with a correct model to follow. You have made considerable improvements in this area and have plans in place to make even more.

Leaders have done a considerable amount of work to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality. Leaders have raised the profile of the importance of good attendance with pupils and their parents. The website clearly sets out your procedures and expectations. There are a range of strategies to reward good and improving attendance. You recognised that your weekly assemblies to celebrate individual, class and whole-school attendance were not having enough effect. These have been replaced by weekly meetings with each class to support pupils to play their part in improving their attendance and punctuality. Your attendance team have built strong, trusting relationships with pupils and their parents. Team members use their thorough knowledge of families to help them to identify the appropriate actions to take in each case. The team's work has been effective in improving attendance and reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. There was a dramatic reduction in the number of pupils arriving late to school in the first part of the spring term.

Following the last inspection, you were asked to focus on improving the behaviour of the few pupils who struggle to manage themselves, particularly when moving around school and when socialising with their classmates. You introduced a new behaviour policy in September 2017. Pupils have a thorough understanding of this policy and staff use procedures consistently. Pupils say that lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour and that most pupils now show respect for adults and their peers. Attitudes to learning are positive and pupils cooperate well together in their learning to share resources and to complete collaborative tasks. Most pupils move around the school sensibly and get along well together at breaktimes. Pupils say that there are adults in school who will listen if they have any concerns. They are confident that, when necessary, appropriate support will be provided. Your team does a considerable amount of effective work to support pupils with social and

emotional needs. However, pupils reported that there are some cases of homophobic name-calling that are not reported to adults and are, therefore, not addressed. Your records show that racist name-calling has increased this year. You recognise that there is further work to do to ensure that pupils understand that this is not acceptable.

Although the procedures that you have introduced are supporting most pupils to behave appropriately in school, there are some pupils who still display very challenging behaviour. This occasionally disrupts the learning of others and could potentially put the safety of themselves and others at risk. You have a range of strategies to deal with this, including time out of class to think, internal exclusion and fixed-term exclusion. Parents are involved at an early stage, as are governors and external agencies when appropriate. These actions are very successful with some pupils, who learn to modify their behaviour, and are, therefore, not subject to repeat fixed-term exclusions. However, the overall proportion of fixed-term exclusions is consistently above the national average, as is the proportion with repeat fixed-term exclusions. There is still work to do to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

External support

As a result of your engagement with external support from Learn Sheffield and external consultants, the effect of leaders' actions has recently become more evident and is gathering rapid momentum. Through partnership with the local authority, middle leaders have received professional development to enhance their leadership skills. This has created a positive culture of self-improvement. Effective practice is shared across the school and policies and procedures are now applied consistently. This is resulting in increased progress for pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector