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7 March 2013

David Harding
Headteacher
Race Leys Junior School
Barton Road
Bedworth
CV12 8HG

Dear Mr Harding

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Race Leys Junior School

Following my visit with Usha Devi, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 5–6 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the sponsors. The inspectors also spoke to a number of parents at the beginning of the school day.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all pupils.

Context

There are currently 288 pupils at this average-sized junior school. Almost all are from White British backgrounds, with the remainder from Mixed, Asian or Asian British heritages. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. Broadly average proportions of pupils are identified as having a disability or special educational needs, or a statement of special educational needs. A broadly average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free schools meals, or in the care of

the local authority, and supported by additional government funding in the form of the pupil premium.

Three new teachers joined the school when it opened as an academy in September 2012: one to lead on improving teaching; one as special educational needs coordinator (SENCo); and one to support the development of physical education across the school. From January 2013 the role of mathematics coordinator has been vacant. A new governing body has been formed.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

Pupils are beginning to make quicker progress in much of their learning. Inspectors could see this in the quality of work in pupils' books and during lessons, and from the increasingly good information the school is collecting on how well pupils are achieving. School leaders have high expectations of how much progress pupils should make and this is shown in the challenging targets set. Younger pupils are making better progress in their ability to read as a result of the lessons that help them understand the letters and sounds in words (phonics).

However, pupils' achievement in mathematics is a cause for concern. This is because some pupils, particularly in Years 4 and 5, are not making enough progress in developing their skills.

Different groups of pupils, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium, are developing their skills more quickly. However, there are still gaps between how well these groups of pupils achieve in reading, writing and mathematics and the rest of the pupils in the school.

Many pupils told inspectors that they enjoy their learning. This enthusiasm, as seen in a Year 4 science class when pupils were investigating 'force', is making a positive difference in a good number of lessons.

The quality of teaching

There is some effective day-to-day teaching at the school. However, there is also too much that is not yet good enough.

The best teaching was typically seen when teachers' high expectations for what pupils could achieve were clear in every aspect of the lesson. In these lessons, teachers gave very good individual support to pupils who were either struggling to understand or needed to be pushed further. Some teachers ask excellent questions to make sure pupils have to think very carefully about why they have given an answer or made a suggestion. One of the strengths of teaching is that lots of pupils are expected to be involved in the lesson. Teachers do this by taking answers from a range of volunteers and by selecting pupils at random. They use different resources well to make lessons interesting and help pupils to learn, including

interactive whiteboards. In the best lessons, teaching assistants know exactly what their part is in the lesson and have the skills they need to be able to help pupils.

A common weakness is that teachers do not plan learning activities well enough to make sure pupils of all abilities are able to learn quickly. Pupils who are doing well are not challenged enough or given enough advice on how to do even better. In less effective lessons, teachers do not check how well pupils are learning and then make changes to their plans when necessary. Occasionally teachers talk for too long or do not give clear enough explanations, and so pupils become restless and confused.

Pupils' work is marked regularly, but many teachers' comments do not give pupils enough ideas about what they need to do to improve in each subject. This was also one of the weaknesses that pupils explained to inspectors. The work in pupils' writing books is often of a good standard but this is not consistent in all their books. In their topic books in particular, basic mistakes are not corrected.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In a number of lessons observed, pupils' behaviour was good. In these lessons, pupils listened carefully to the teacher and remained focused on what they were learning for almost all of the time. In the two Year 6 classes, pupils worked very well together when solving problems in mathematics and exploring the Shakespeare play *Macbeth*. When pupils' behaviour is not good this is directly linked to the quality of teaching. For example, pupils become restless if they are given too much time to complete an activity. Some classes are too noisy to make sure that learning is good, and the pupils told inspectors they do not like it when this happens.

Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors, and were keen to tell inspectors that they feel safe. They show respect for their school and make sure there is very little litter in the dining room or playground. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, major incidents are rare. However, pupils say that the playground at breaktimes is dominated by those playing football when the field is out of bounds, and this was observed during this visit.

Leaders are reviewing the school's behaviour policy, so that pupils can be more involved in deciding on what 'good' behaviour in lessons and around the school should look like.

Attendance is average and rising, and pupils arrive at school and to lessons on time.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The school's leaders are making a difference and this can be seen in the improving quality of day-to-day teaching and the better progress that pupils are making. They have an honest view of the school's strengths and what still needs to be done. The school action plan concentrates on the broad areas of its work that need to improve,

but does not focus enough on how well all groups of pupils should achieve. Training for teachers and teaching assistants, such as on phonics and how best to ask a range of questions that help pupils to learn, is beginning to make a difference in the classroom. Leaders know this because of the checks they are making. However, these checks are not frequent enough and do not yet involve all those with leadership responsibilities. An important next step for the school's leaders is to use all available information to make sure that further improvements happen quickly.

Currently, the school's lead teacher is also coordinating the development of mathematics. This is not sustainable. The development of pupils' skills in mathematics is not clearly planned for across year groups. There is also no obvious approach to the teaching of problem-solving skills in the subject across the school.

The recently formed governing body is establishing its ways of working and is beginning to gather information about the school's work, particularly in relation to pupils' achievement. Training for governors, planned for this term by the academy sponsor, must make sure that these leaders are in a better position to evaluate the work of the school. The governors know how the school has used the pupil premium funding, and is beginning to evaluate how effective this has been.

A recent survey of parents' views shows that they are happy with how well their children are learning and being cared for.

External support

The headteacher is pleased with the support received from the sponsor, the Griffin School Trust, which has helped the school in evaluating its work. A recent review reflected a more positive picture of teaching than was observed during this inspection, but it supported leaders very well in identifying important next steps for improvement. As well as the training planned to help governors to be more effective, the sponsor will be funding an external consultant on a temporary basis to work with school leaders on improving mathematics.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of day-to-day teaching so that more is at least good to help pupils make quicker progress. Do this by making sure that teachers:
 - plan lessons that suit the abilities and needs of all groups of pupils, particularly the more able
 - use a wider range of approaches to check how well pupils are learning in lessons, and then make changes to their plans when necessary
 - are more aware of developing pupils' mathematical skills, including problem solving, from year to year
 - give pupils more specific written advice about what they need to do to improve their work.

- Strengthen the work of the school's leaders by:
 - adapting the school action plan so it has a sharper focus on setting targets for how well different groups of pupils will achieve
 - making sure that all teachers with leadership responsibility make more frequent checks on how well the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are improving, and then take quick action when necessary
 - appointing a mathematics coordinator to lead on improving the quality of teaching and the curriculum in mathematics
 - making sure that governors have good-quality training that helps them to know the best way to hold the school to account.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector