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23 June 2014

Ms Joy Denning
Headteacher
Catherine Junior School
Brandon Street
Leicester
LE4 6AZ

Dear Ms Denning

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Catherine Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 20 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- address pupils' prior underachievement in writing by developing their skills across the curriculum
- ensure that governors undertake a systematic programme of visits in order to check the rate of improvement in their areas of responsibility.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with senior leaders, the leaders of English and mathematics, a group of eight pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your plans for improvement. I considered documentation relating to the monitoring of teaching. I reviewed your most recent data relating to pupils' achievement. We conducted a tour of the school. I considered the quality of

teachers' marking. I scrutinised the quantity and quality of pupils' learning in a range of subjects.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection the governing body has received a number of resignations from members of staff. A teacher of Year 3 pupils left the school in March 2014 and a temporary teacher has been appointed for the summer term. A teacher of Year 6 pupils and the leader responsible for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are both leaving at the end of the summer term 2014. The governing body has appointed two assistant headteachers, to replace the departing staff, who will take up their positions in September 2014. The school has moved to a new building from temporary accommodation at the beginning of June 2014.

Main findings

You have provided teachers with clear guidance about what is expected in their practice. Allied to support from senior leaders, teachers are planning and delivering better structured and more interesting lessons. Teachers are using information from the school's tracking system to set more challenging targets for pupils. Pupils say that they are provided with work which is set at the right level of challenge and they are more motivated to work towards achieving their targets. Teaching assistants have responded positively to training which has helped them to become more effective in providing support to pupils. This has particularly helped disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language, to have a more secure understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make).

You have developed the skills of senior leaders in making more rigorous checks on the quality of teaching. Their checks show that teaching is improving, particularly in reading and mathematics. This is reflected in pupils making faster progress in these subjects. Teachers have developed their understanding of how to improve pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling. However, teachers are not providing enough support to help pupils to improve the quality of their compositions. Pupils are not developing their skills to write at length well enough, particularly in science, history and geography. Teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' writing in their topic books are not high enough. Pupils do not receive sufficient guidance from teachers, such as through marking, to help them to improve their work, especially their topic work. As a result, pupils are not making fast enough progress in writing, where a legacy of prior underachievement exists.

Governors have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities, following an external review of their work. Governors are more aware of the support provided to those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, and the extent to which this is having a positive impact on their achievement. The Chair and Vice-Chair

of the Governing Body undertake frequent visits to check on developments. However, they are not supported well enough by other governors. Checks by governors who are responsible for subjects or other aspects of the school's work are not undertaken often enough. As a result, senior leaders are not yet held fully to account for the rate of improvement.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority advisor has provided effective support to the school. Senior leaders are challenged about the rate of improvement and the extent to which this is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Leaders of English and mathematics have benefited from working with a Specialist Leader of Education from the Leicester Teaching School Alliance. She has helped them to develop their skills in undertaking checks on the quality of teaching.

Senior leaders have a better understanding of how to hold teachers to account for pupils' achievements through working with a Local Leader of Education based at Soar Valley College.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester.

Yours sincerely

David Carter

Her Majesty's Inspector