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Miss P Tankard
Headteacher
Yew Tree Community Primary School and Acorn Nursery
Yew Tree Lane
Dukinfield
Cheshire
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Dear Miss Tankard

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Yew Tree Community Primary School and Acorn Nursery, Tameside

Following my visit to your school on 25 February 2015, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 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:

- Ensure that remaining gaps in achievement, notably amongst boys and a small number of pupils who have special educational needs, are swiftly closed.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, representatives of the governing body and of the local authority (LA) to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with a group of leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school's work. The school's post-inspection action plan and school development plans were considered, together with a wide range of documents related to the school's work. These included records of the school's

monitoring of teaching and learning over time, minutes of meetings of the governing body and reports from external quality assurance of the school's work. Additionally, I made brief visits to all classes to check the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour. I also scrutinised a sample of pupils' written work across subjects and year groups. The single central record was checked and found to meet requirements.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection in July 2014, nine new teachers have joined the school, as well as three teaching assistants and three non-teaching staff.

Main findings

You, senior leaders and governors have all worked extremely hard over the last year to set a clear direction for the school's improvement. This has resulted in strong progress in tackling the recommendations from the last Section 5 inspection that judged the school to require improvement. Middle leaders are making an increasingly confident and valuable contribution to the school's improvement, because of the high quality training they receive from senior leaders and through strong external links to observe good and outstanding practice.

Governance has strengthened significantly since my last visit, to the extent that the school has moved from an Interim Strategic Group to the reconstitution of a full governing body. New appointments have brought increased capacity to the governors' work, for example in finance, and to ensure all governors are placed in roles where they can be most effective. They are more fully involved in the school, for example, through classroom visits and new governors receive rigorous individual support. They are keenly involved in governor training, both online and through the LA's Governor Services. Inspection evidence shows the high level of challenge with which governors are able to hold the school to account as a result.

A significant number of the recommendations from the 2014 inspection concerned provision in Early Years. As headteacher, you and the leader of this phase have been determined and successful in transforming learning spaces, so that they are much more inviting for pupils and activities are much more purposeful, especially in continuous provision. Staffing of this phase has been re-organised and is now more coherent, with much more effective planning between teachers and teaching assistants.

The school's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was evident, notably in the very young pupils' celebration of Chinese New Year. They were able to sample Chinese food, make Chinese music and enact a 'dragon dance' together. The teacher's careful, inclusive practice, to ensure that disabled pupils and those with complex needs were fully involved in the activity was impressive.

The impact of the robust systems noted on my last inspection, for identifying underperformance amongst pupils and staff has begun to be evident in unvalidated national information on pupils' assessment in the 2014 national tests. At Key Stage 1, some assessment outcomes in Key Stage 1 improved, for example, in phonics. However there remained gaps in attainment in higher-level writing and for some pupils in mathematics.

From low starting points, pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2 in most subjects improved to be broadly in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils making expected progress was above average in reading and writing, as were the proportions exceeding expected progress. Expected progress in mathematics was close to the national average, but fewer pupils than nationally exceeded it. However, inspection evidence shows that pupils have many opportunities to tackle a wide range of mathematical problems in real-life contexts. This is preparing them effectively for changes to the national curriculum.

The most able pupils achieved well overall in 2014 and attainment gaps for some, but not all disadvantaged pupils, narrowed, especially in English.

Current information held by the school points to some strong improvements to pupils' achievement this year, but there remain inconsistencies across year groups and between subjects. The school knows that these gaps must close quickly in order for the school to become good.

The school has placed a strong emphasis on the rigorous checking of the quality of teaching, because they understand the close relationship between pockets of underachievement and the quality of teaching that pupils receive. Senior leaders have worked relentlessly to maintain the predominantly good teaching achieved across the school. The significant number of new teachers joining the school this year require time to be established and the school is investing tried-and-tested, high-quality support to ensure that this happens quickly.

Marking continues to be regular and conscientious and, in general, helps pupils to move their learning forward. There are occasional lapses when feedback is not specific enough and checks are not made to ensure that pupils follow up advice given.

Pupils conducted themselves extremely well during the inspection, in and around the school, including during playtimes. There was no evidence of disruption of any kind in classrooms and no sign of litter anywhere. Pupils are smartly dressed and speak politely and confidently with each other and adults, often using impressively sophisticated language for their age and starting points.

The school's recent survey of the views of parents and carers about the school shows that they are very positive about the improvements senior leaders and governors have made over the last year.

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 school draws effectively on support provided by or through the LA. They have negotiated the services of a consultant to support the induction of newly-qualified teachers. The LA also supports the moderation of the school's judgements about pupils' progress and the quality assurance of other aspects of the school's work. The school has developed strong links with Prestolee Teaching School to provide staff with opportunities to observe good practice in teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing

Her Majesty's Inspector