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Ms C Dursley
Headteacher
Wheatfield Primary School
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Dear Ms Dursley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wheatfield Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 March 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 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 all staff, particularly in Key Stage 2, follow the revised expectation for responding to pupils' written work and mathematics, in order to quicken pupils' progress or deepen their understanding.
- check that governors keep a range of evidence, cross referenced to the school improvement plan, to evaluate precisely whether actions taken are improving teaching and pupils' achievement in English and mathematics.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Brief visits were made to all classes with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, to look at teachers' marking in pupils' English and mathematics books. A discussion was had with the headteacher and deputy headteacher about the revised expectations for responding to pupils' work. The school improvement plan and the revised marking policy was evaluated.

Main findings

You, your senior and middle leaders are ambitious for your school. You have all quickly focused on raising the expectation of how teachers' respond to pupils' work in English and mathematics. In Key Stage 1 this has had an almost instant effect in improving teachers' marking. On our visit to the classes, we saw some written work, which was marked in a way that gave pupils advice on what to do next. Similarly, in the mathematics books, marking generally helps pupils to deepen their understanding. However, we agreed that the marking of mathematics could be refined further.

Teachers in Key Stage 2 have been slower to rise to the challenge of sharper marking. In mathematics too much work is just ticked, with no comment or further challenge. Some teachers, however, do mark mathematics extremely well which challenges pupils' thinking and helps them to make better progress. During our visit to one Key Stage 2 class, a pupil told us how his skills in mathematics had improved. He put this down to the challenge posed by the teacher in responding to his work. This approach is yet to be consistent in every class.

In Key Stage 2, pupils work in English is marked in a way that is more developmental than is the case in mathematics. The school policy is for teachers to ask pupils challenging questions when they mark a piece of work. When this happens pupils make better progress. However, you agreed that there are still some glitches in a common approach to marking.

You have reviewed the school's marking policy, involving staff and governors. The new policy is linked with the school action plan, which focuses on the right areas for improvement. Your programme for checking how well the school is doing shows precisely the steps needed to reach your targets. Subject leaders' plans in English and mathematics add more detail to the overarching school action plan. Similarly, the action plan for early years sets out what needs to be done, by when and by whom, and how this will be evaluated. You break down each action on a weekly time sheet. This ensures that all leaders are continually focusing on the areas for improvement from the last inspection.

You told me that the staff team have a very positive attitude towards improving their own teaching and pupils' achievement. More of this work is being led by middle leaders than previously. Your middle leaders are a committed group of professionals who have set out the journey of improvement in their subject or area of responsibility. Some of the current high quality written work and mathematics that we saw during my visit is testament to this work. English and mathematics leaders told me that their skills as leaders are developing all the time. The deputy headteacher's coaching on observing teaching and learning and feeding back to staff is supporting this work.

Governors are very committed to supporting the school's improvement. Governors have quickly got to grips with improving their skills through an external review of governance, as recommended in the last inspection. The governor action plan fits with the school action plan. Governors visit school regularly. They take part in learning walks with senior leaders and look at pupils' work. Governors told me that they regularly listen to parents views on the education their children receive. When governors visit school they talk to pupils about their work. Governors recognise they are sometimes missing a range of information against the areas for improvement. Consequently, they are less able to evaluate how well actions taken are improving teaching and pupils' achievement.

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 offers useful support through regular progress reviews. The governors have accessed support and training from the local authority governor services. The school is working with another local school to develop middle leadership. Middle leaders report that this, together with the externally delivered middle leadership course is already improving their confidence in contributing to improving teaching and pupils' achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Neech
Her Majesty's Inspector