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Mrs Michelle Hill
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hill

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Leamore Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 June 2016, 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 January 2016. 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the school's action plan clearly identifies who is responsible for monitoring progress and that, where appropriate, this includes governors and other leaders
- review and refine the school's action plan to ensure that the improvements secured by actions taken are clearly recorded and that the focus is on current priorities.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, teachers, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. A tour of the school was undertaken including visits to all classrooms to look at the work of teachers and pupils.

Context

Since the last inspection, you have been appointed as substantive headteacher. A new assistant headteacher for key stage 2 and a new safeguarding lead have also been appointed to the leadership team.

Main findings

You are taking effective action to move the school forward. You, your leaders and members of the governing body have a strong, shared vision of what needs to be done in order to ensure that all pupils make the progress they should. You have successfully motivated and enthused your teaching staff who share your high expectations and make strenuous efforts to ensure that they uphold them. You have an accurate and realistic view of where the school is now and you are clear that the school will be good as rapidly as possible. You feel, and I agree, that the stability now achieved, as a result of successful recruitment, will help to accelerate that process because teaching has improved significantly as a result.

The school's action plans identify specific and appropriate actions to secure improvement. However, we discussed the need to review and refine plans as objectives are achieved so that current priorities are always at the forefront. We also discussed your plans to distribute leadership more widely as skills are developed across the staff. For instance, a major focus for you at this point is making sure that middle leaders are involved in monitoring the quality of teaching once the current focus on building the skills and understanding of their roles and responsibilities has been achieved.

The governing body have further developed their skills and understanding since the last inspection. For example, training undertaken has ensured that every governor has a secure understanding of information about pupils' progress. Governors meet as a full governing body on a monthly basis, visit school regularly in their roles as link governors and ensure that such visits are recorded and outcomes shared. As a result, it is clear that members are monitoring closely and challenging appropriately because they know and understand the school's current strengths and weaknesses well. For instance, governors have recognised the need to clarify the school's next steps, including how the work of link governors could be more clearly enshrined in the school's programme of monitoring. They have ensured that external challenge is

part of the process of improvement.

The school's rigorous monitoring systems indicate that teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. In part this is due to appointments of new, skilled members of staff. However, it is also the result of carefully targeted professional development that offers a good balance of training for whole-school priorities and support for the development of individual teachers. Consequently, staff feel that they are challenged but also supported to achieve their aims.

Visits to classrooms and scrutiny of pupils' books provided clear evidence that teachers are now using assessment information more effectively to plan learning. It is increasingly the case that appropriate levels of challenge are set to meet the needs of different abilities. Consequently, the most able are working hard and the less able are well-supported to meet their potential.

Since the last inspection you have implemented a revised approach to teaching mathematics across the school. This is proving successful in improving pupils' ability to use logic and reasoning effectively, including in subjects other than mathematics. This is because teachers plan activities that link with pupils' own experience of life, so that they can see where and how their skills in mathematics can be applied.

Pupils speak of their school with pride. They say they enjoy learning and that they feel happy and safe in school because they can count on their teachers and other adults to help and support them when they have problems. They say that teachers make learning fun and that they learn a lot in their lessons. A Year 4 pupil noted that she liked, 'a bit of a challenge and my teacher makes sure I get one!' She was clearly impressed by this.

Pupils say that behaviour is improving because there are new 'rules' that are applied consistently. Although they say that a few children do still misbehave and disrupt their learning, they also say that teachers take steps to manage it and that these pupils are beginning to understand how to control their feelings more effectively as a result of the school's actions. Pupils made it very clear that they appreciated this, demonstrating an impressive maturity and understanding of the efforts made by their teachers and by the pupils involved.

Clear systems have now been put into place to enable detailed analysis of patterns of behaviour. This has allowed you to identify where poorer behaviour remains and, importantly, what has been the cause of it. You have provided training to ensure that all staff, including those who supervise pupils at lunchtimes, have a thorough understanding of how and when to record incidents that occur. Consequently, recording is more frequent and accurate, so that such information is informing actions to tackle both causes and outcomes. Although the initial outcome is a rise in the number of behaviour incidents recorded, you are confident, and I agree, that as the systems become embedded, these will reduce. Moreover, during the inspection, I saw no evidence of poor attitudes to learning or of low-level disruption.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support and challenge through a balance of monitoring and review meetings and commissioned support from local high-performing schools. This has enabled school leaders to build capacity for continued improvement, maintain an appropriate focus on their priority to improve teaching and to secure a stable staff that will support the school in sustaining those improvements.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford
Her Majesty's Inspector