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Rachel Purvis
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Purvis

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to William Rhodes Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 November 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 that you gave to me and for the time that you made available to discuss the actions that 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 November 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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.

Evidence

I focused during this visit on the actions taken by the school to deal with the recommendations from the section 5 inspection to increase the capacity and effectiveness of leadership and to improve behaviour, so that the pupils' attitudes are consistently positive. During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, the chair of the governing body, subject leaders, and representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated a revised version of the school improvement plan. I visited classrooms,

observing and talking with the pupils, and met formally with a group of Year 6 pupils. I looked at safeguarding records and records relating to the behaviour of the pupils.

Main findings

You, the governing body, other leaders at the school and the local authority are fully aware that you are still at the early stages of improving the school. Though provisional, the latest available information about the progress of the pupils shows the extent of the challenge faced by the school. It indicates that far too few of the pupils in Year 6 last year made good progress. In particular, the progress of boys and of disadvantaged pupils was not good enough. In contrast, the most able pupils did reasonably well. The early indications are that the progress of the pupils currently at the school is starting to improve.

You made important improvements to your school improvement plan after my last visit. The improvements have already enabled the governing body to begin holding the school to account more rigorously than before for how the plan is put into action. You are using the plan effectively as a focal point for making necessary changes at the school, in the teaching, the management of the pupils' behaviour, and the effectiveness of the leadership of the school.

Several important changes have been made: in staffing arrangements, leadership responsibilities, timetabling, approaches to the teaching of reading and of mathematics, the support provided to the pupils most in need, and in working with parents and families. These fundamental changes have been made quickly since my last visit. You do not currently have secure evidence of the impact of the changes, but the changes have led to some improvements in the pupils' attitudes in lessons that are apparent. The pupils show that they can stick to the tasks that they are given and work productively. They can be prompt in responding to the teachers' instructions.

Misbehaviour is still having a negative effect at times on the pupils' behaviour and their views of the school. You have improved the school's approaches to managing the behaviour of the pupils. You have put in place new systems for reporting and recording instances of misbehaviour, which offer the potential to help you get a better grip on misbehaviour. The staff are being trained in a variety of ways to assist them in dealing with behaviour.

The school works well with other agencies, including educational psychologists and the local authority behaviour-support services. This is not only increasing the resources available to the school, but also supporting the staff in developing their skills in managing the pupils' behaviour.

You have been successful in getting the support of the staff and of the governing body for the culture that you are developing at the school and for the direction of

the improvements that you are seeking. Much responsibility for making the changes still rests with you, which has the potential to inhibit the rate at which the school can make progress. Other leaders are not yet effective enough in speeding up the rate of improvement; they are, however, alert to what needs to be done, understand the scale and nature of the task, and are willing to make a full contribution. They have not received sufficient support to date to enable that to happen.

I got a good sense during this visit that the senior leaders, the governing body, the staff and the local authority, are working together with a genuine desire to deal with the problems faced by the school, and they have a collective view of what needs to be done. The recent changes that you have made are laying suitable foundations on which to build. The pace of change at the school currently is not slow, but the time available is quite short and much significant improvement remains to be achieved.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I have recommended to Ofsted that I stay in contact with the school and may visit again to check on the impact of the improvements noted during this visit.

External support

The school remains, appropriately, in the local authority's highest category of support. The local authority has adapted its approaches to working with the school, in recognition of the urgency with which improvement is required. It has extended the range of services that form part of a 'team around the school'. It is identifying accurately the aspects of the school that need further support and has suitable plans in place to meet those needs. It is responding positively to reasonable requests from the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss
Her Majesty's Inspector