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Ms Stieve Butler
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Butler

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Meadow Park Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 22 May 2017, 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy 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 the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good academy.

The academy should take further action to ensure that:

- teachers respond consistently to meet all pupils' needs during lessons in order to offer greater challenge, particularly for the most able
- pupils gain regular opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in science, and across the wider curriculum, to promote deeper learning and more detailed and higher-quality work in these areas
- improved monitoring enables further improvements to the provision for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or

disabilities.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with yourself, other senior leaders, subject leaders, pupils and representatives of the local governing body and the CfBT Schools Trust (the trust) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with several parents at the beginning of the school day. You led me on a tour of the school and provided me with copies of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, together with a wide variety of documents to scrutinise. I reviewed examples of pupils' work completed in English, mathematics and across the curriculum.

Context

Following the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership and governance of the school. Eight members of staff have left. You joined the school in May 2016 as interim headteacher. There have been changes to local governance, including the recent appointment of a new chair of the local governing board. Governors have wasted no time in restructuring their meetings, undergoing training and ensuring that regular visits to school give them a sound working knowledge of safeguarding issues and the progress of pupils in the school. Plans to recruit three more members are under way.

This year, the trust has ensured a comprehensive programme of guidance and support for yourself, leaders and governors in order to make the improvements and changes needed. New staff have been appointed and you have restructured and re-organised leadership at all levels in order to facilitate greater clarity, accountability and some efficiencies. Currently, the deputy headteacher is teaching, as the school is not fully staffed. However, advertisements are in place and leaders are confident that a suitable appointment will be made.

Main findings

Since joining the school, you have wasted no time in re-invigorating and enthusing the staff. Together with governors and the trust, you have effectively supported and retained teachers to enable you to forge significant improvements in the quality of teaching. Your strategic thinking and clarity of vision have enabled you to take appropriate steps to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report, and there are promising signs of impact on pupils' engagement and the progress that they have made this year. Quite rightly, you and your team appreciate that there is still a great deal to do to raise standards still further and ensure that teaching is consistently good over time.

You joined the school four months after the previous inspection and have determinedly set about rapidly addressing the recommendations for improvement that were made at that time. Your very thorough self-evaluation, coupled with sharp and systematic improvement plans, provides a clear vision of the next steps that you need to take. Quite rightly, you have involved staff in the development of these plans. Consequently, they have a shared sense of ownership of the process of school improvement, and staff morale is high. The trust is actively involved in reviewing the progress that the school is making towards meeting its targets and is facilitating access to resources and training where necessary. Your skilful leadership has already fostered a shared vision of school improvement, and there is a strong sense of teamwork and optimism at Meadow Park Academy.

You have ensured that the school is now much more outward looking than it has been in the past. Working with the trust, and more recently in partnership with local schools, you ensure that middle leaders have started to access appropriate training and support. Consequently, the leadership of English and mathematics has improved. However, you are aware that further improvements to the leadership and quality of teaching and learning are still required in other subject areas. Senior leaders continue to be appropriately focused on improving day-to-day teaching and are using a programme of lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work to monitor learning across the school. Where weaknesses in teaching have been identified, you have devised and offered suitable support, facilitating change where necessary. In addition, you have rightly prioritised a sequence of further training and support for teaching assistants in the school improvement plan.

Teaching and learning in Reception are a strength of the school. Children gain confidence from their good relationships with staff and from collaborative play with others in their class. They make good progress and develop communication, literacy and mathematical skills that prepare them well for key stage 1. Strong teaching with a clear focus on phonics underpins the good progress that children make in reading. High proportions of pupils achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. However, due to past staffing turbulence, historically this progress has not been maintained as pupils progress through key stages 1 and 2. You are acutely aware of this and, as a result of improved teaching, pupils' work in English is now showing improvements in most areas across the school.

When planning lessons, teachers are beginning to make better use of performance information to check what the children can already do and to challenge them more. However, the lessons we visited and the pupils' books seen demonstrate the need for some teachers to have higher expectations of what children can achieve. Examples were seen where time was wasted by some pupils completing tasks that were too easy for them before moving on to more thought-provoking activities. Leaders rightly recognise that teachers and teaching assistants must be more flexible during lessons to respond to the needs of all pupils in order to increase the level of challenge for middle-attaining and the most able pupils.

All of the parents, staff and pupils that I met during the day believe that pupils are safe, well looked after and happy in school. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that there is a culture of vigilance. Records are well maintained, detailed and of high quality. There are clear, well-understood systems in place to manage safeguarding requirements. Unfortunately, the support that you have received from the local authority has been of variable quality. You have been particularly thorough and challenged the local authority robustly when required to ensure that it offers more timely and appropriate responses to support vulnerable pupils.

You have secured additional funding in order to have a full-time special educational needs coordinator from September and have clear plans to improve the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Although senior leaders have ensured a wide range of appropriate provision and interventions are in place to support disadvantaged pupils, they have not yet reviewed and evaluated the impact of these thoroughly enough. Leaders and governors are aware that the pupil premium report on your website is not yet detailed enough to meet requirements. More needs to be done to evaluate the impact of different interventions and support strategies for these pupils. Clear plans are in place to begin this work soon.

External support

Leaders and governors are drawing wisely on a range of support and training available from the trust and through partnerships with other schools. There is still more work to be done to support teachers to learn from best practice, both within the school and elsewhere. English and mathematics leaders recognise and value the quality of the training and support that they have received and understand their key roles in improving standards in their subjects. Although subject leaders have made a very strong start to revise and improve their curriculum planning, their plans have not yet been implemented. Leaders recognise that further work is required to ensure that recent improvements made to the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics are cascaded into science and across the wider curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry

Her Majesty's Inspector