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Ms C Boxall
Holbeach Primary School
Nelgarde Road
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Dear Ms Boxall

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holbeach Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 June 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 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 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 recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that some pupils' work in their mathematics books follows the agreed school guidelines to further increase pupils' rate of progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the head of school and the three assistant headteachers. I held discussions with pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I visited a number of classes from each year group, together with you and the head of school, during which time I scrutinised a number of pupils' books. Documents provided by the school included local authority and external consultants' notes of visits to the school and the school's single central record.

Main findings

School leaders, including the governing body, quickly prioritised actions required to address the areas for improvement identified at the most recent inspection. You and your leadership team's determination and drive for improvement have helped in garnering staff support for the changes you have introduced. These include a review of the school's system for assessment and a more rigorous evaluation of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. The subsequent action plan has helped establish a clear direction for school improvement. Actions are appropriate and considered so that staff receive appropriate professional development in a timely manner. Already, improvements to teaching are having a positive effect on pupils' progress in mathematics. Teachers are increasingly challenging pupils, particularly the most able pupils, in their mathematics lessons. Work in pupils' books shows that they are making strong progress in developing their reasoning skills over time. However, there is more work to do to ensure that pupils present their mathematical work consistently in line with the school's guidelines.

Senior leaders check the quality of teaching regularly through robust evaluations of planning, teaching and pupils' rates of progress. Staff requiring further development receive high-quality bespoke training and support from a member of the senior leadership team. The sharing of good practice, working in partnership with the other school in the federation, has been effective in helping teachers improve their classroom practice. Refined tracking arrangements are proving to be more successful in identifying groups of pupils that are not achieving as well as they should. Teachers are using assessment information more effectively to inform their planning. This information is then used accurately to check pupils' progress, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils talked confidently about the improvements they have seen since the inspection. They said that they love their mathematics lessons and that teachers' guidance helps them develop their skills when explaining mathematical strategies they use when problem solving. They also said that behaviour is positive and staff deal with issues quickly. They recognised that staff use rewards and sanctions consistently and fairly. They said that they feel safe in school and appreciate the work the school does in developing their online safety. They expressed ambitions for themselves to achieve highly and gain qualifications for a good job in the future.

Parents have remained supportive of the school since the previous inspection. You and the governors regularly inform parents of the actions the school has taken in light of the previous report. Many parents attend the workshops organised to help them support their children's mathematical development.

Governors are very committed to the action plan for school improvement. They have supported you in setting the expectation for improving standards of teaching. They use the information about pupils' progress more sharply than in the past to challenge leaders appropriately. Governors visit the school regularly. This enables them to see the school's improvement actions for themselves.

Safeguarding is effective. You have made sure that all records are of high quality and fit for purpose. The safeguarding governor ensures that the register of staff checks is up to date by reviewing it regularly. Recent school training has covered all recent government safeguarding requirements. This has increased staff awareness of how to raise concerns should they believe pupils may be at risk of harm.

External support

The local authority provides appropriate support. It has helped to refine your plans for improvement. The current local authority representative knows the school well.

The school swiftly took action on the recommendation to review the use of the pupil premium funding. Senior leaders and governors now have a better awareness of the impact of the pupil premium spending. They ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive appropriate support in their learning and equality of opportunity. For example, leaders make sure that any disadvantaged pupil has access to technology for online mathematics activities. Current school assessment information indicates that the differences are diminishing between disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, and their peers. In some year groups, they are outperforming other pupils.

Implementation of recommendations from the review of governance has sharpened governors' use of school information. They now ensure that the recording of meetings better reflects the challenge they offer senior leaders. Reports and minutes are now circulated in a more timely matter to maximise time in meetings.

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

Yours sincerely

Sara Morgan
Her Majesty's Inspector