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Ms Alice Middleton
Headteacher
Rufford Primary School
Bredon Avenue
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Dear Ms Middleton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rufford Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 July 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 November 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:

- make sure that governors quickly respond to the review of governance and develop a specific plan of action with measurable success criteria that are time-bound and linked closely to the school development plan
- ensure that improvement plans are more precise and identify measures of success, where appropriate, in terms of outcomes for pupils
- ensure that leaders, staff and governors have a clear understanding of the specific barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils encounter and target funding and resources more sharply to address their individual needs.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, governors and three representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated and a series of short visits was made to classrooms across year groups. A wide range of pupils' books were reviewed.

Context

Since the inspection in November 2016, one teacher has resigned. In addition, one new governor has joined the governing body. There will be a full complement of governors from September 2017.

Main findings

You have been quick to respond to most of the issues that were identified at the last inspection. You have made an honest appraisal of the school and produced an accurate self-evaluation. This has been used to form the school's development plan which, in its broadest sense, identifies the right priorities. However, while you are able to clearly articulate actions needed to move the school forward, these are not always reflected in the development plan. The plan lacks a degree of precision, and measures of success are sometimes no more than a list of tasks to be completed. Despite this relative weakness in action planning, you have a clear understanding of what is required to make the school good.

Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning because of regular, comprehensive checks on teaching and work in pupils' books. Closer analysis of pupils' progress is providing you with a clearer indication of how well pupils are achieving. Lesson observations ensure that there is a sharper focus on some of the core priorities to improve teaching. This has resulted in improvements to teachers' questioning and raised expectations about what pupils can achieve. Leaders use findings from observations to share overall strengths and areas for development with staff. In weekly staff meetings, you provide feedback from monitoring and celebrate best practice. This is helping staff to learn from each other and improve their teaching.

Governance is improving. A review of governance has been completed and governors are much clearer about what they need to do to support and challenge leaders. However, governors' monitoring is sporadic and not linked closely enough to the school development plan. More recently, governors have had greater involvement in setting the strategic direction of the school, although their follow-up tasks are not always acted upon quickly enough. Due to a delay in the review of governance, the pace of change has been slower than it should have been. More recently, governors have developed a more insightful understanding of the actions leaders have taken to improve the school because they are more engaged with

leaders. The 'data-sharing meetings' are proving beneficial and have enabled governors to have a better grasp of pupils' progress.

As a result of the changes to teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' progress is improving. Evidence from the school's own monitoring records shows that teachers are intervening more regularly in learning when pupils make mistakes or experience difficulties. Teachers' expectations have risen because leaders hold teachers more rigorously to account through termly meetings at which pupils' progress is discussed. These meetings are sometimes attended by local authority officers who offer an impartial, external perspective and additional challenge.

Leaders have been successful in addressing gaps in pupils' skills in numeracy and mathematical reasoning. Effective training has supported teachers to extend their knowledge and teach more effectively. Work in books shows that pupils are using their reasoning skills with increasing confidence in mathematics. However, some of the oldest pupils do not get the opportunity to experience the same high-quality, open-ended mathematical problems that younger pupils do. This hampers their ability to develop their reasoning skills further. The leader for mathematics is aware of this issue and is taking action to deal with it. Provisional 2017 key stage 2 results in mathematics are a noticeable improvement on the previous year's and moving closer to the national average.

You have begun to address the needs of the most able pupils, although recognise that there is still further work to be done. Teachers provide work which is more challenging for all pupils. The needs of the most able pupils are being better met in mathematics, especially through reasoning work. You have made some changes to the approaches to teaching, which are helping to increase pupils' progress. For example, teachers' questioning is more effective and this is helping to challenge and extend pupils' learning.

A pupil premium review has been carried out and this has raised the profile of disadvantaged pupils throughout the school. Nevertheless, leaders are less secure in stating the impact of teaching assistants' work on disadvantaged pupils' progress. Leaders and staff are not as clear about the specific barriers these pupils face, and therefore do not make sure that what is provided for disadvantaged pupils matches their needs closely enough. Governors do not yet have a coherent perspective on the spending of the pupil premium funding.

Leaders have made a concerted effort to raise the profile of reading throughout the school. This has been largely successful and enabled more pupils to make better progress. However, disappointing provisional 2017 key stage 2 reading results indicate that there is further work to do. Leaders have already begun to consider ways to further improve reading. Leaders understand that they need to make sure that assessments are accurate, and apply the same robust moderation methods to reading as they have to mathematics and writing. Various initiatives to encourage reading have been implemented, although their success varies from class to class.

This is because some teachers have made more effort to promote reading than others.

Leaders have made good inroads into improving provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the progress these pupils make over time remains mixed. Leaders have monitored interventions for pupils so staff have been able to identify what is and is not working well. Leaders have capitalised on the strengths of teaching assistants and identified 'champions' for specific subjects. There are comprehensive provision maps in place and tracking of progress is thorough.

External support

The local authority has provided extensive and effective support. It has an accurate view of the school's performance because local authority officers make regular visits and provide challenge and support in equal measure. Leaders actively draw on the support of the local authority to seek clarification and ask for advice. Leaders, staff, governors and the local authority are all galvanised in working towards addressing the school's weaknesses and improving outcomes for pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill
Her Majesty's Inspector