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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Miss Sarah Penny
Headteacher
King George V Primary School
Beeches Road
West Bromwich
West Midlands
B70 6JA

Dear Miss Penny

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to King George V Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 March 2017. 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:

- improve teaching in key stage 1 by making sure that teachers plan work that is sufficiently challenging and that they check that pupils have a clear understanding of what to do to be successful
- ensure that all governors provide an effective and professional level of challenge and support to school leaders
- streamline the school improvement plan so that leaders and governors can easily evaluate the progress of the most important priorities for improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other leaders and members of the governing body, and I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I undertook a learning walk with you and observed behaviour at lunchtime. I evaluated the school's improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and notes from external support visits, including the external review of governance. I also analysed the quality of work in pupils' books and information about pupils' current attainment and progress.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed permanently. There have been some changes in teaching staff. An external review of governance has been conducted and the chair of governors is acting upon the recommendations arising from it. A new governor, who has substantial experience of governance and school leadership, has been recruited to the governing body.

Main findings

Your appointment as permanent headteacher has added much-needed consistency and direction for pupils, staff and parents. You have galvanised the staff team and created a sense of energy and purpose for improvement. The permanent appointment of the deputy headteacher has added further strength. The two of you form a determined team and, along with other leaders, you have secured clear improvements in the relatively short time since the last inspection. You have also successfully managed a fragile period of staffing during the current academic year. You have secured a full complement of permanent teaching staff for September which will help to add further consistency for pupils.

Systems for evaluating the quality of teaching have been improved. Following regular visits to lessons and checks on the quality of work in pupils' books, leaders provide incisive feedback to teachers on how to refine their practice. As a result, leaders have an effective understanding of which teachers need support and exactly what those teachers need to work on. You review this monitoring on a regular basis. You have nurtured other middle leaders and they are working effectively within this process. For example, the mathematics leader showed evidence of the impact of working alongside other teachers to improve aspects of their teaching. Middle leaders are also improving their analysis of assessment information, which is helping them to identify where teachers or pupils might require additional support.

Improvement plans demonstrate that you know the key priorities and are responding to them with sufficient urgency. However, as the year has progressed, the main school improvement plan has been supplemented with several additional

action plans. As a result, improvement plans have become over-complicated and progress towards the most important priorities cannot be easily evaluated by leaders and governors.

You and the early years leader have successfully brought about improvements in Reception. Visits to outstanding early years settings and support from a teaching school have sparked developments in the learning environment, as well as the provision for writing. In the focused group session that we observed together, the teacher used effective subject knowledge to teach children writing skills. Other children were choosing to write in their independent activities. The quality of work in children's books and your assessment information show that children are making better progress in writing. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development has risen this academic year.

Teaching in key stage 1 has strengthened, but is still not consistently good. Teachers now provide more challenge to pupils because work is better matched to their needs. This has had impact on the achievement of the most able pupils and a larger proportion are achieving the higher standard compared to last academic year. However, some pupils' progress slows because the level of challenge is not always appropriate. Furthermore, pupils do not have a clear idea of how to be successful in their work, particularly in writing. In the teaching that we observed, some of the examples that staff showed pupils were not of good quality.

Teaching in key stage 2 is having a positive impact on outcomes for pupils. Your assessment information and the work in pupils' books show that more pupils are achieving the expected standard and higher standard than last academic year. Standards by the end of key stage 2 in grammar, punctuation and spelling have improved considerably.

You and the deputy headteacher have successfully worked to improve pupils' behaviour during lunchtimes. Lunchtime staff now provide better support because of the training that they have received. They use the school's procedures for managing behaviour more effectively and encourage pupils to play purposefully. Pupils are positive about improvements and enjoy the range of activities on offer. You provided clear evidence that incidents of inappropriate behaviour have decreased since the previous inspection.

The external review of governance that took place after the previous inspection provided an accurate analysis of the weaknesses in the governing body's effectiveness. It highlighted that some members of the governing body do not understand their professional role and are unable to provide the right blend of challenge and support to leaders. The chair has put into place a clear action plan that includes greater opportunities for training. Minutes of meetings already show a more appropriate and professional level of challenge. The vice-chair and a new governor bring important educational experience to the governing body.

External support

Leaders make effective use of a wide range of external support. The local authority's school improvement visits help leaders to sharpen their practice on the important priorities. The local authority adviser worked with middle leaders to ensure that they have a deeper impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. A local teaching school also provides effective school-to-school support. For example, one of their specialist leaders in education has worked alongside the early years leader to secure improvements. The recent pupil premium review was commissioned by the teaching school and there are positive early signs that progress for disadvantaged pupils is improving, particularly in key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Meekin
Her Majesty's Inspector