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8 September 2017

Mrs Marlene Douglas
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Dear Mrs Douglas

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Marsh Hill 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 May 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:

- improve outcomes in mathematics and writing in key stage 1
- improve attendance for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- take more account of the views of pupils
- ensure that the website meets all its requirements for information schools should publish.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff, two members of the governing body, including the chair, a representative from the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP), and the headteacher and challenge adviser from Saint Mary's Church of England Academy (a local teaching school) to discuss the action taken by the school since the last inspection. A meeting was held with a group of pupils. The school's action plan was evaluated. Other documentation considered during this inspection included: the school's self-evaluation; the school's assessment report on pupils' performance, progress and predictions; information on pupils' performance over time; the record of the challenge adviser's school visits; action plans for the school, including mathematics; 71 responses to Parent View; safeguarding records; documents relating to the pupil premium funding and special educational needs; and information on governance.

Context

Since the school's last inspection in May 2016, four teachers have left or are leaving in July 2017, including an assistant headteacher. The chair of the governing body stepped down after the last inspection. Following an external review, the governing body was reconstituted and a new chair appointed. The size of the governing body was reduced and two new governors with financial and educational expertise respectively were appointed. Following the last inspection, arrangements for external support from Saint Mary's were put in place from September 2016. Three new assistant headteachers have been appointed, one very recently since May 2017. New leadership is in place for assessment and the early years. A new mathematics coordinator has been appointed from September 2017.

Main findings

You have taken rapid and decisive action to tackle previously identified weaknesses in leadership and teaching. This has led to either improvements or, in some instances, changes in teaching staff and leadership. The recent appointment of three assistant headteachers is adding additional capacity for leadership. However, in some instances, post holders have not been in post long enough to demonstrate their impact.

You have introduced a detailed assessment tracking system to check the attainment and progress of pupils every half term by year group, pupil group and subjects. Groups monitored closely include low-, middle- and high-attaining pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils. This detailed information enables you to pinpoint any areas of concern so that you can take action more quickly. It allows you to compare the quality of teaching you see in lessons with the progress pupils are making over time. Governors have a clear picture of how pupils are doing and where strengths and weaknesses are.

You have identified clearly where teaching was not yet good, particularly in Years 1 and 4, and put in place support, training and monitoring for identified teachers. As a result, you and your challenge adviser evaluate that a much higher proportion of teaching is now at least good.

In the most recent tests at the end of key stage 2, pupils' outcomes improved in reading and mathematics. Writing outcomes fell but remain above the national figures. Following more rigorous moderation this year, current figures give a more accurate reflection of pupils' performance than the previous year's very high figures. Outcomes have improved in the early years and remained stable in phonics at the end of Year 1. In key stage 1, outcomes in mathematics and writing are not yet high enough, given pupils starting points. This is as a result of inconsistency in the quality of teaching when pupils were in Year 1.

Outcomes for most-able pupils are improving in most year groups but not yet strong enough in mathematics in Years 2 and 4. Disadvantaged pupils are progressing well in most year groups, except in Year 4, especially in writing. Low-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are progressing well.

The school's action plan is closely aligned to the key issues identified for improvement. In many instances, for example for attendance and teaching, there are clear milestones so that governors can evaluate throughout the year whether the school is on track to meet its targets.

The large number of parents expressing an opinion on Parent View were overwhelmingly positive about the school. Almost all said they would recommend the school to another parent. A very large majority said that the school responds well to their concerns and that they receive valuable information from the school. A very small minority did not agree, however.

Governors work with increased rigour and challenge to leaders. Following the review which they commissioned, they have ensured that they have increased their expert knowledge on the governing body with respect to finance and education. They are well informed, which enables them to ask searching questions of leaders more effectively. They know how well different groups of pupils are doing in each year group.

Targets for teachers are closely linked to pupils' outcomes. Teachers are challenged and held to account for pupils' outcomes at meetings between leaders and teachers where pupils' progress is discussed. Governors use information about pupils' performance effectively to determine whether teachers should receive the pay awards recommended by the headteacher.

Safeguarding arrangements continue to be effective and the school meets its statutory duties.

Overall attendance has continued to improve. However, the rates of absence for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to be higher compared to all pupils nationally.

The school's website does not yet meet Department for Education requirements for the information schools should publish concerning the curriculum and governance.

A small minority of parents and pupils spoken to thought that the homework set was not appropriate as it was not sufficiently linked to their learning. Older pupils thought that not enough curriculum time was spent on art, music, drama, computing, science and languages.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The external support from a local teaching school, commissioned shortly after the school's last inspection, has provided rigorous challenge to leaders. External reviews of teaching have led to improvements in the quality of teaching. Support for leadership and governance has also led to improvements.

The school's leaders have worked closely with Wolverhampton University on leadership in mathematics. This has led to improvements in pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 but not yet sufficiently so at the end of key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector