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Dear Clare Longden

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wallbrook Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 September 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- accelerate the progress for pupils in Year 3 and Year 6
- make sure that teachers intervene more regularly during lessons, in order to maximise the level of challenge for pupils
- evaluate the impact of the actions in the school improvement plan with more precision
- make sure that the assessment system helps leaders to identify pupils not on track to make good progress by the end of the key stage 2 national assessments
- provide intensive support for pupils with complex behavioural needs, so that fixed-term exclusions are reduced.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the chair of governors, three senior leaders and a representative from the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I undertook a learning walk with you and the senior leaders. 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 assessment information of pupils' current progress.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the staff team and to the governing body. A new chair of governors has been appointed who is a national leader of governance. In key stage 2, the temporary arrangements for staffing have now been made more stable. Furthermore, the senior leaders no longer have responsibilities as full-time class teachers.

Main findings

You have worked tirelessly, with the full support of your staff team, since the previous inspection. As a result, you and your senior leaders have driven successful improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. You recognised that the significant and unforeseen staffing changes needed to be addressed, so that pupils in key stage 2 received a more settled education. Permanent staff have now been recruited and this provides a solid foundation for further improvement. Senior leaders have relinquished full-time class teacher responsibilities, which means that they are in a stronger position to support teachers to improve their practice. Their monitoring and coaching of staff is regular and useful. The new chair of governors is providing astute and experienced support to the school. His early work to improve the level of challenge and support by the governing body is proving effective.

You and your senior leaders highlighted that expectations of what pupils can do needed to be raised and this message has been clearly translated into the classroom. We looked at pupils' books and the learning in classrooms which showed clear evidence of increasing challenge overtime. Teachers are consistently applying the school's approach to the teaching of writing and in mathematics, pupils are getting regular opportunities to apply their skills in problem-solving and reasoning. We also visited the early years, where we observed that children have settled incredibly well at the start of the year. Across the school, relationships between staff and pupils are strong and this has a positive impact on the learning.

Since the previous inspection, you have developed the school's assessment system, which enables you to evaluate the progress and attainment of groups more effectively. You are using this information to review progress regularly and put in place specific support for certain pupils. The information currently shows that

progress has picked up in key stage 1 and in some subjects in key stage 2. However, pupils' progress in Year 3 and in Year 6 needs to be accelerated. Teachers are also becoming increasingly confident at accurately assessing pupils against the age-related standards. The school was recently externally moderated for end of key stage assessments in the early years and key stage 1, which validated that teacher assessments are accurate. You now need to make sure that your assessment system enables you to quickly identify any pupils not on track to make good progress by the end of key stage 2 tests. In 2017, pupils' performance in the end of key stage 2 tests was not strong and it is vital that the current Year 6 pupils are challenged and that their progress is tracked very effectively.

You have made sure that teachers have developed their understanding of the demands of the curriculum in English and mathematics. Leaders have created examples of the quality of pupils' work against the objectives of the curriculum. This is gradually increasing teachers' expectations and most of the work in books shows that pupils are being set work that matches their ability. Occasionally, teachers are not quick enough to intervene during lessons in order to challenge pupils when they are finding learning easy. You and your senior team recognise that focusing on this will help to accelerate the progress that pupils make.

During the visit we also looked at the quality of presentation in pupils' books. This has improved since the previous inspection and pupils are taking more pride in their work. You have also taken steps to improve the quality of handwriting across the school by looking at the root cause of pupils' barriers to writing. You have taken the time to talk to pupils and staff, before implementing an approach that will help develop pupils' core strength and fine motor skills. The new approach has now been introduced and the early signs of its impact are positive.

Since the previous inspection there has been an increase in the amount of fixed-term exclusions. During this visit, the behaviour in classrooms and around school was positive. However, you rightly shared that there is a small group of pupils with complex emotional and behavioural needs who require more intensive support.

Your improvement plans provide a concise and clear direction for the school. They encompass relevant priorities and identify clear roles, costings and timescales for the improvement. You also ensure that the plans link coherently to the monitoring cycle and to the plan for staff's training. There is still some work to be done to make sure that the improvement plans are evaluated for impact more thoroughly. This will enable leaders and governors to better identify which actions are having the most impact.

External support

The local authority have provided effective support to you since the previous inspection. Subject advisors have been particularly useful to drive improvement in the early years, phonics, reading and mathematics. They work with leaders on a

regular basis and visit notes are detailed, with clear next steps to support improvement. The local authority officer linked to the school has changed three times since the previous inspection. The newly appointed officer has a clear plan to make sure that future support is as strategic as possible and meets the precise needs of the school. The local authority was instrumental in brokering the appointment of the new chair of governors.

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

Matt Meckin
Her Majesty's Inspector