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Ms K Bentley
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Bentley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cottingley Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 23 January 2018 with Her Majesty's Inspector Michael Wardle, 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- make sure that pupils, especially those with high prior attainment, are able to secure deeper understanding and demonstrate this in their writing
- improve accountability by being clearer in the school improvement plan about the difference that the actions are intended to make to improve boys' writing and the timescales for them to do so.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the chair of the governing body, who is also a representative of the multi-academy trust, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Meetings

also took place with pupils to gain their views. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A learning walk was undertaken with the deputy headteacher, during which samples of pupils' work were scrutinised. I also reviewed the school's analysis of attendance and behaviour, monitoring of teaching and learning and documents relating to the work of governors.

Context

Since the inspection in November 2016, there have been a number of changes to the governance of the school. In January 2017, interim arrangements in the form of a management committee were made. These continued until September 2017, when a new governing body was established under a chair of governors who is also a representative of Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). Three teachers are absent on maternity leave and temporary teachers are taking their classes. Two members of the support staff have also left and the school has managed to fill one vacancy.

Main findings

The steady progress made by the school has quickened considerably since September 2017. Changes that you have introduced to the teaching of mathematics and reading are becoming more secure. This is as a result of the well-planned programme of training and continual professional development that is taking place throughout the school. Most teachers are also using information about pupils' performance more reliably and carefully to inform their planning of lessons. However, you also know where the quality of teaching is not as strong and are acting to improve it.

Senior leaders are increasingly able to analyse those aspects of the school that they are responsible for as a result of changes to the school's systems for managing information. Together with your senior leadership team, you are tracking the progress of pupils and using this information to guide the decisions you make about where to deploy staff to provide additional teaching and support to pupils who are making slower progress. In discussions, you were very clear about where you need to act next and the difference that you expected to see, particularly in relation to the achievement of most-able pupils working at greater depth of understanding. This clarity is not reflected as sharply in the school's plans for improvement. In particular, the timescales that you are working to are unclear, and the measures you will use to identify whether the actions you are taking are making a difference to pupils, especially boys, are not sharp. Consequently, this does not help governors to hold the school to account as well as it should.

The school's latest assessment information and my visits to classrooms showed that many more pupils are undertaking work that is pitched to meet their needs and to challenge them. For example, pupils' books show that the actions taken to improve the teaching of reading are also having a positive effect on pupils' writing and engagement in learning. Teachers choose books to read to their classes that are stimulating. They use them effectively to model good language and to demonstrate how to capture readers' interest. In discussion with inspectors, pupils say they enjoy

the tension and emotion in the stories. They are also starting to use these features in their own writing. The school is implementing a mathematics programme of work developed by the trust. Pupils are finding this challenging, but are also demonstrating resilience. They say the work 'brings out the best in them' and teachers support them through their careful explanations. Pupils' work shows that they are able to explain their thinking clearly, both verbally in response to questions and in written calculations.

Your higher expectations of pupils' behaviour are being implemented more securely through the school, and it is clear that it has taken time to establish strategies to get to this position. Lessons are calm and pupils work in a focused way. Pupils know that more is expected of them. In discussions, pupils say that, since autumn term, 'There is less disruption to learning' and 'Teachers are helping pupils who make the wrong choices.' The deputy headteacher is providing effective support to a small number of pupils who need additional support to improve their learning and their behaviour.

Establishing strong governance with local representation is proving difficult. Current governors are experienced and are providing support and guidance to the school. The school is working to implement the advice and guidance from an external review of pupil premium funding. Gaps in the attainment and progress of disadvantaged Year 6 pupils diminished in 2017. During this inspection, we reviewed the progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school. It is clear from this exercise that some pupils are moving on quickly in their learning. It also showed that targets for disadvantaged pupils in some year groups are low and do not reflect the higher expectations that you now have of all pupils.

External support

The school is drawing widely upon the support provided by AET to provide direction and guidance to governance and for curriculum support in reading, writing and mathematics. Currently, this support is proving useful to the school, especially in relation to governance. The school is working to increase the representation of parents and carers and others from the local community on the governing body in order to strengthen local accountability. Visits to other schools have been used successfully to inform and develop approaches to behaviour. Since November 2017, these have become more effective and are having a greater impact on pupils' learning and progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector