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Mrs P France
Mosscroft Primary School
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Dear Mrs France

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mosscroft Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- develop the breadth of expertise of the governing body by fully embedding the skills and practices gained following the review of governance
- ensure that consistently good standards of teaching and learning, evident in most classes, are shared among those who are new to the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, two assistant headteachers, the chair of the governing body and three other members of the governing body. I also met with subject leaders and a representative from the local authority. We discussed the actions taken since the last inspection. You and I toured the school and visited classrooms to observe pupils at work. I evaluated the school's improvement plan, your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and other evidence. I met with a group of 10 pupils and looked at work in their books. I also considered the school's most recent pupils' performance data.

Context

You restructured the school's staff in the previous academic year. As a result, senior leadership positions were reduced from four to three and the school removed the role of deputy headteacher. Two assistant headteachers have been appointed, one on a temporary basis. The number of teachers has been reduced from seven to six. Two newly qualified teachers have joined the school. A significant number of new governors joined the governing body this academic year.

Main findings

You lead with a clear commitment to ensure that pupils receive a broad and challenging curriculum. You have dealt effectively with changes to the staffing structure, and ensure that all staff have a collective understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. You undertook a 'visioning day', where all staff and governors were given the opportunity to look at the school's core values and agree upon a motto which best illustrates your vision for the future. Parents, carers and pupils were also invited to put forward their ideas. As a consequence, you agreed that the motto 'Small school, big heart, nurturing potential, inspiring confidence' best represents your approach. This ethos was clearly evident during the inspection in the classrooms you and I visited.

At the previous inspection, the inspector highlighted a need to improve the quality of governance in school and recommended an external review of governance. This was in order to assess how this aspect of leadership could be improved. Leaders undertook the review immediately. The first action from the review was to undertake a skills audit to identify the areas where further expertise was required in the governing body. This has been most beneficial. For example, you have now appointed a governor with a background in education. She is offering the school challenge and positive support in areas such as the use of assessment information and effectiveness of the use of the pupil premium funding.

As a result of the external review of governance, leaders now ensure that new governors receive detailed induction when they begin their role. This is helping them to develop a clear understanding of their statutory responsibilities. The chair

of the governing body is gaining effective support from a national leader of governance and this enables him to develop further his role as chair. The clerk to the governing body is producing detailed minutes of meetings and these evidence the fact that governors are asking leaders challenging questions, especially around pupils' progress. Meetings are carefully scheduled to ensure that attendance is high and, finally, the school's website has been updated and is monitored regularly. During the inspection, it was evident that much progress has been made and governors are in a stronger position to hold leaders to account. However, you have experienced a significant change in membership of the governing body. To ensure that governance is fully developed in the future, we agreed that the actions noted above require further time to embed, especially for the many governors newly appointed.

At the previous inspection, the inspector noted that the quality of leadership and management should be improved further by developing an assessment system which allows leaders and teachers to track the progress made by different groups of pupils, particularly the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils. This was to enable these pupils to receive effective support and make stronger progress. This has been addressed in a successful manner.

You looked at a variety of assessment systems before deciding upon one which best suits the needs of the pupils in your school. Leaders, including some governors, undertook training to ensure that they had a clear understanding of assessment. This enables them to challenge leaders on their ability to analyse and account for the progress of all groups of pupils, including the most able. Teachers now have a clear awareness of pupils' learning needs and discuss them confidently with colleagues, and with leaders, during the pupils' progress meetings. They also use the information to create very useful class-based action plans for those pupils who are falling short of their targets.

Leaders are aware that some pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities may make smaller steps of progress. As a consequence, a complementary assessment system, which tracks the smaller steps to achievement, has been introduced. As a result of this work, leaders are able to demonstrate the current performance pupils are making throughout school. They are justifiably proud to note that pupils' performance at the end of each of the key stages is improving on that seen at this point last year.

Finally, the inspector noted at the previous inspection that the quality of teaching and learning required development. This was to be achieved by challenging the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils to achieve the highest standards. Much work has been done in this area. You attended training to develop your understanding of high-quality teaching for the most able pupils. You have subsequently carried out the training with members of staff. As a consequence, teaching and learning have improved. The work in pupils' books is of a good overall standard. This is because learning is well structured, with clear expectations for

success. Leaders' monitoring and my observations of pupils' learning during the inspection show that, in almost all classes, pupils are provided with opportunities, and the resources necessary, to achieve at a good level. However, we agreed that more work is required to ensure that the consistently good standards of teaching and learning, evident in most classes, are shared among all teachers and teaching assistants who are new to the school.

In the Nursery and Reception classes, the environment has been developed to ensure that there is a consistently high level of challenge across all areas of learning. Children are provided with the resources necessary to achieve well. Their books, which were analysed during the inspection, demonstrate rapid progress, most notably in writing skills. As a consequence, the current proportion of children, including the most able, who are performing at a level typically expected for children of this age is significantly higher than in previous years.

You have worked successfully with other leaders to develop wider opportunities for pupils' spiritual development and their awareness of British values. Each classroom has a display which shares pupils' spiritual thoughts. Words and prayers are written on the trees which form part of each display. Pupils have an exemplary understanding of British values and were able to discuss them with me in relation to their own school and to wider events, such as the Holocaust in the Second World War. During my visit, all pupils were celebrating World Book Day, dressing up as a character from their favourite book. Each class studied a book that relates to a specific British value. For example, a Year 2 pupil told me that the main character in his story, a burglar, broke the rule of law because he stole someone's property.

You have reviewed the use of the primary school physical education and sport premium funding. Leaders now ensure that there is a greater range of sporting opportunities for pupils in order to extend their learning. Pupils were very proud to share with me the number of activities that take place, both during and at the end of the school day. Teachers benefit greatly from the training they receive from sports specialists. This has enabled them to further develop their own teaching skills in the areas of physical education and sport.

External support

The local authority has supported you by funding the purchase of the new assessment system. The school improvement adviser knows the school well and works in an effective manner with both you and the governing body. He provides training for governors and attends their meetings. Support from local primary schools has helped middle leaders to develop the skills they need to carry out their roles effectively. You have also begun to build links with a local academy chain and they offer you valuable advice and support in areas linked to school improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector