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Nick Lambert
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Dear Mr Lambert

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chilwell Croft Academy

Following my visit to your school on 15 May 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 took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

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

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that actions for improvement have clearly identified intended outcomes and that actual outcomes are fully evaluated
- consolidate improvements in mathematics by developing leadership capacity in the subject and by ensuring that opportunities are taken to develop numeracy skills across the curriculum
- embed strategies to improve progress in reading for all groups of pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils, the most able and pupils who speak English as an additional language
- ensure that standards in writing are maintained and developed

- build upon improvements in teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that staff consistently challenge all groups of pupils, particularly the most able, to make rapid progress from their different starting points.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteachers, the chair and vice-chair of the trust board and the trust's teaching and learning leader. The focus of the meetings was to assess the impact on standards of actions taken since the last inspection.

Short visits were made to 12 lessons with you and a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and minutes of meetings of the trust board, were considered. The school improvement plan was evaluated and the single central record was checked.

Context

Since the last inspection, five teachers have joined the school and an assistant headteacher has been promoted to acting deputy headteacher. An assistant headteacher, six teachers, two of whom were temporary, two teaching assistants and four other members of staff, two of whom were on short-term contracts, have left the school. A member of the trust board has left and another trustee has joined. The executive headteacher is now the executive director of the Equitas Academies Trust.

Main findings

Leaders and managers are using their clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses to make improvements. Strengths identified at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and effective action has been taken to address the areas for improvement.

The school's plans to tackle the areas requiring improvement identify relevant actions, set within an appropriate time frame. Plans are specific and they clearly identify the staff responsible for leading and taking actions. However, actions do not consistently identify intended outcomes and actual outcomes are not closely evaluated in terms of their impact on provision.

As a result of improved teaching, standards have risen in mathematics. Questions are used well to deepen understanding and address misconceptions. The assessment system has been refined so that it helps to raise teachers' expectations of all pupils. Consequently, the most able pupils now apply their calculation skills in difficult activities and explain their reasoning on a more consistent basis.

This area of the curriculum is well led by the acting deputy headteacher. She has worked well with the teachers responsible for key stage 1 and key stage 2 mathematics to improve provision. However, their leadership skills are not fully

developed as they are relatively new to these areas of responsibility. Senior leaders are also aware that opportunities to develop mathematical skills in other subjects are not consistently taken.

The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection. Where teaching is most effective, it is carefully planned to meet the needs of pupils with different starting points; resources are used well and teaching assistants are effectively deployed to help pupils make faster progress. Staff use their secure subject knowledge, clear explanations and positive relationships with the pupils to aid learning.

Pupils behave well in class. They usually listen carefully and work well with each other. Pupils are happy to help others learn. During the inspection, pupils were fully engaged in a range of activities.

There have been some weaknesses in teaching in the past and not all current practice matches the best that can be found in the school. However, leaders are taking effective action to help staff improve and ensure that current pupils are helped to fill gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

Outcomes improved in 2017, but some weaknesses remained. In last year's Year 6, the most able pupils did not make strong progress overall and progress in reading for all pupils did not improve as fast as it did in writing and mathematics. Leaders have begun to address these areas for development and the most able pupils currently in the school are now making better progress. Pupils' progress in reading is improving throughout the school, but leaders know that actions to ensure that all groups of pupils make secure progress in reading need to be developed further. They are also aware that they need to continue to focus on maintaining pupils' writing skills in order to secure sustained progress in this area.

External support

Equitas Academies Trust provides effective support and challenge and a range of services to the school. Trustees use their extensive knowledge and skills to hold leaders to close account. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this to challenge leaders to improve the school further.

The trust has increased leadership capacity by creating the position of acting deputy headteacher and has supported leadership development at all levels. Trustees have worked with you and the deputy headteachers to ensure that assessment information is accurate and they have provided staff with opportunities to observe best practice outside the school.

The trust's leader of teaching and learning has worked well with school leaders to help teachers improve their practice. However, as capacity within the school has grown, the support provided by the trust to improve teaching, learning and assessment has reduced.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector