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19 June 2018

Mr Neil Small
Executive Headteacher
Seymour Primary School
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Dear Mr Small

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Seymour Primary school

Following my visit to your school on 7 June 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 that 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 good.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the vocabulary of pupils by offering rich learning opportunities across different subjects
- continue the effective programme of monitoring and coaching to improve teaching so that it has a greater impact on the progress of the most able pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, other leaders, the deputy chief executive officer of The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) and three members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Together with a range of leaders, I visited classrooms and phonics groups to observe pupils learning and to talk to them about their work. I also met with several middle leaders and looked at a range of work from a group of the most able pupils.

Context

The substantive headteacher left in April 2017. An interim headteacher was in place between April 2017 and August 2017. From September 2017, an executive headteacher from another TKAT school was appointed. However, this arrangement ended in December 2017. The current executive headteacher was appointed in January 2018 and shares his time between Seymour Primary School, another TKAT school and his duties as a regional director of the multi-academy trust. There is a new chair of governors.

Main findings

Despite the changes in leadership, the outcomes for pupils at the end of each key stage and in the phonics screening check have risen since the previous inspection. This is due to the hard work of teachers, who have realised that they needed to have higher expectations of their pupils. The school's assessment information predicts that pupils' outcomes at the expected standard will improve further this year. Evidence from this inspection suggests that this is very likely to be the case. However, there is more to do to increase the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards.

Since the current executive headteacher's appointment in January, the pace of change and improvement has intensified. The local governing body and staff are clear about the new vision for the school and are keen to support the improvements that are still required.

The executive headteacher has taken a more structured approach to monitoring the quality of teaching and to coaching teachers to improve their practice. His expectations are very clear. This can be seen in the standardised approach to the teaching of writing across the school and to the teaching of phonics in early years and key stage 1.

Previously, teachers and leaders were working in compartmentalised bubbles in the different phases of the school. These bubbles have been burst and the school,

possibly for the first time, now sees itself as one school. This has been symbolised by the creation of a single large hall, getting rid of a dividing wall, to enable all the school to assemble together. Leaders are no longer leaders of phases, they are now leaders of learning and this has given them renewed vigour and optimism. They also have a greater understanding of the progress pupils make throughout the school.

The executive headteacher has coached leaders to enable them to coach teachers to improve their practice. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving rapidly, most notably in English. However, the fact that many children often have a very limited vocabulary when they join the school remains a barrier to success.

Well-chosen published programmes in phonics and writing are being delivered successfully and consistently and this is leading to pupils making stronger progress. It is only where teachers lack the confidence to adapt learning tasks within lessons that the most able pupils are not successfully challenged. Leaders are aware of where this is an issue.

The plan to introduce a new programme for the teaching of mathematics is being trialled successfully in Year 1. Very early indications are that this programme will have a positive impact on improving pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills as it is rolled out across the school.

Staff really value the opportunities that they have had to work with other schools locally in the multi-academy trust, and more widely. For example, regular meetings to moderate pupils' work have helped staff to be more accurate in their assessments.

Attendance has continued to improve and persistent absence is declining because of the dogged efforts of senior leaders to work with families to ensure pupils' attendance increases. More families are understanding the importance of attending school regularly.

Future action plans to continue to improve teaching and the curriculum are fit for purpose. There are clear targets set that are realistic and measureable. Leaders know that they can do more to personalise learning and the curriculum for the pupils of Seymour Primary.

Pupils' behaviour and their personal and social development remain strengths of the school. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds get on with each other harmoniously. There are high levels of tolerance and respect between pupils from different communities.

External support

TKAT directors have brokered interim and substantive leadership for the school through the period of change. The multi-academy trust has provided the local governing body with training to help governors fulfil their roles successfully.

Regular visits by the regional executive director have focused on helping teachers to improve teaching and outcomes at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2. Each of these visits has left the school with clear actions to take, and has had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in national assessments.

The multi-academy trust and the executive headteacher know that the way to sustain these improvements is to invest time in improving teaching and leadership throughout the school. They are committed to doing this.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Selby

Her Majesty's Inspector