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Mr Domenic Volpe
Headteacher
Kingsmeadow Community Comprehensive School
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Dear Mr Volpe

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kingsmeadow Community Comprehensive School

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 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 three 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:

- check that all teachers have continually high expectations of what pupils can achieve
- further refine and sharpen the monitoring of disadvantaged pupils' attendance.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, members of your senior team, and three governors. I scrutinised a range of school documents, including the school improvement plan and self-evaluation, and minutes of meetings of the

governing body. I read the external review about the school's use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. I examined documents and information relating to attendance and behaviour. The school's records of how pupils' progress is tracked and the resulting actions were also considered. Records and information relating to the school's work to assess and improve the quality of teaching were examined.

Evidence of the quality of teaching and learning was gathered through observation of lessons and scrutinising pupils' work. I met with pupils formally, and informally at breaktime.

I checked the school's records in relation to the safe recruitment of staff.

Context

Since the previous inspection in April 2017, the headteacher at the time has left the school. You took up post as headteacher in September 2017, as did a new deputy headteacher. You have restructured your senior leadership team, with four new assistant headteacher posts due to commence in September 2018.

Main findings

Leaders have taken swift and effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving quickly and pupils' progress is improving. You, supported by the recently appointed deputy headteacher, and the governing body, have brought to the school an uncompromising determination that all pupils achieve as highly as possible. As one pupil said, 'The school is better than it was, and it's going to get even better.'

Leaders have acted quickly and decisively to raise the aspirations of teachers, so that they expect more of their pupils. The foundation for this is leaders' blunt, honest self-evaluation of the school's recent performance. Leaders have achieved this through their rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching, which accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses. Leaders' records of lesson observations are straight-talking and do not shirk giving professional learning points. As a result, teachers are left in no doubt as to the expectations required of them. Several teachers this year were not successful in their performance-related appraisal. Leaders are well placed to continue to follow up these checks to ensure that the necessary changes in teaching practice continue to be made.

Leaders' plans, and subsequent actions, are effective in driving up pupils' standards of attainment. This is particularly due to the clarity of the plans, which are tied closely to the areas for improvement at the previous inspection. Planned actions are precise, with clear timescales, responsibility for delivery, and clear criteria against which to measure their success. Termly progress commentaries against each priority give a clear rating of how far each has been achieved, and crucially, what needs to happen next. Actions deriving from such quality assurance processes are

skilfully threaded through into subject improvement plans and to actions for individual teachers. This cohesive, coordinated approach has resulted in everyone singing from the same hymn sheet. Consequently, pupils' outcomes are improving.

Leaders have, rightly, prioritised improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils as part of their drive to raise expectations for all pupils. There is a consistent approach among teachers in planning to meet their needs. Disadvantaged pupils are now identified in seating plans, with specific teaching strategies directed towards them. As part of leaders' work to further improve the effectiveness of the use of questions, for example, it is typical for disadvantaged pupils to be specifically supported and challenged through careful questioning. Evidence in pupils' books confirms that disadvantaged pupils are routinely challenged, and that work is tailored well to meet their individual needs.

The quality of teaching is also improving because leaders have ensured that teachers set tasks which challenge and motivate pupils of all abilities to want to learn and improve. Newly implemented processes for tracking how well pupils are doing give teachers the information they need to plan learning more effectively. Pupils are actively engaged in their work. They respond with interest to carefully phrased questions designed to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, reflected in the good standard of presentation evident in most books. Typically, work is neat and well presented. Leaders are not complacent, however. They recognise that some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching still exist. Leaders are yet to ensure that all teachers have equally high expectations of pupils. As a result, while improving, pupils' outcomes are not yet good.

Leaders are improving the use and impact of homework. They have consulted with parents and carers, and listened to the views of pupils. This is an ongoing focus. Leaders acknowledge that there is more still to do.

Action has been taken to improve the systems and strategies for reducing the persistent absenteeism of disadvantaged pupils. This has resulted in a slightly improved picture. However, leaders acknowledge that improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains a priority. A sharper focus on monitoring the patterns of absence for this group of pupils is necessary.

External support

Leaders commissioned an external review of the use of the pupil premium, which took place in March 2018. Together with work already initiated by you, the review has supported an improvement in disadvantaged pupils' progress. Even so, you, along with your governors, are clear that there is more still to do.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of children's services for Gateshead and the regional schools commissioner. This letter will be

published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Shaw
Her Majesty's Inspector