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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 September 2018

David Akers
Ward Jackson Primary School
Clark Street
Hartlepool
County Durham
TS24 7LE

Dear Mr Akers

Requires improvement: second monitoring inspection visit to Ward Jackson Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 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.

This monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. It was undertaken in light of the further priorities for improvement identified at the first monitoring inspection, which took place on 10 November 2017.

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.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held discussions with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, pupils, parents, the governing body, an officer of the local authority and a diocesan representative to discuss the actions taken since the last monitoring inspection. I reviewed the minutes of governing body and officers' group meetings which have taken place since the previous monitoring inspection. The school development plan was evaluated. We observed teaching, learning and assessment in all year groups, from Nursery to Year 5. The vast majority of Year 6 pupils had moved on to their secondary schools at the time of this monitoring inspection. I also checked the school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff. You provided the most recent assessment information for children in the early years, and pupils in Years 2 and 6, together with details of pupils' attendance and those who are persistent absentees.

Context

One governor has resigned and four new governors have been appointed since the first monitoring inspection. A new subject leader for mathematics took up post at the beginning of the spring term and teaches in the Year 4/5 class. A new Year 3/4 teacher was appointed on a short-term contract, until the end of the academic year. One teaching assistant resigned at the end of January. The school continues to have a very mobile population of pupils.

Main findings

Since the last monitoring inspection, governors have undertaken an audit of their skills and identified some omissions. New governors with a range of pertinent skills have been recruited. They have attended a comprehensive induction programme. Governors are beginning to challenge senior and subject leaders more robustly. Meetings of the full governing body and governors' committee meetings are now clerked appropriately. An external review of governance was carried out between March and April in 2017. The reviewers undertook a follow-up visit in January 2018 and noted the 'substantial progress' made to improve governance. Overall, the effectiveness of governance is improving.

Leaders have developed a concise, informative and useful school development plan. School improvement actions are identified clearly, as are the measures by which governors can evaluate their success. There is clear separation between who will carry out school improvement actions, who will check that they have been undertaken and who will evaluate their success. As a result, leaders at all levels are fully aware of their duties and responsibilities.

Senior leaders have concentrated their efforts on improving the standards that pupils reach, and the progress that pupils make, in reading, writing and mathematics since the beginning of the academic year. They acknowledge that provision for the wider curriculum requires development in the 2018/19 academic year.

The Year 6 pupils have had extra reading, writing and mathematics lessons throughout the year. The unvalidated results from the key stage 2 assessments undertaken by Year 6 in 2018 show a substantial increase in the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standards in all subjects.

The standards attained by pupils at the end of key stage 1 have also improved in reading, writing and mathematics. However, standards in reading and writing remain below the 2017 national averages. Notably, the school's assessment information indicates that a small number of pupils achieved greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018. No pupils achieved this in 2017.

Similarly, at the end of the early years, the school's assessment information shows

that more children have exceeded the early learning goals in literacy and mathematics this year than in 2017.

The subject leader credits pupils' better progress in reading to the introduction and implementation of a new reading scheme in key stage 2. Pupils told the inspector that teaching in reading is better than teaching in writing and mathematics. They like being encouraged to read more books. The educational visit to the national centre for children's books, Seven Stories, was particularly well received by pupils.

Governors identified correctly that the standard of pupils' writing remains a key area for improvement. During this inspection, we noted that many children at the end of the Reception Year, and pupils at the end of Years 1 and 2, do not form, size and place letters properly. These basic skills require immediate development. Teachers' expectations of pupils' letter formation and writing habits need to be higher. Currently, some pupils place their head in the palm of one hand or lie it on top of one arm as they write. Teachers do not ensure that pupils adopt a good seating position when they are writing.

The new subject leader for mathematics undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work prior to taking up her post formally at the beginning of January. Quite correctly, she identified that pupils were too often repeating easy calculations that they had already mastered. Teachers, under the subject leader's assertive guidance, now include opportunities for pupils to use their reasoning skills in all mathematics lessons. As a result, pupils are becoming more skilled at using and applying their mathematical knowledge to solve problems and carry out investigations.

The coordinator for special educational needs has identified correctly that the provision for some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities requires rapid development. His incisive monitoring has identified that pupils' needs are not identified early enough. This is of high priority in the school's improvement planning.

Teachers and support staff act in accordance with the revised behaviour and anti-bullying policies consistently. The school was an oasis of calm during the inspection. Pupils have noticed that other pupils' behaviour is improving. Leaders are pleased that there are fewer incidents of poor behaviour disrupting lessons. Leaders know their pupils and families well. They provide effective support to get pupils into school every day. As a result, pupils' attendance is rising. The number who are persistently absent is reducing.

External support

An officers' group, which includes officers from the local authority and the diocese, meets at intervals to challenge and support leaders in relation to all aspects of school development. This group has kept leaders, including governors, firmly focused on school improvement.

Leaders acted immediately to comply with the recommendations of a recent diocesan review of the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils. As a result, the school's central record of staff recruitment checks is now monitored by the headteacher and governors regularly. It is fully compliant with requirements.

The local authority has provided effective support for the development of the quality of teaching in English and mathematics. In addition, officers recently checked the accuracy of teachers' assessments at the end of the Reception Year, in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 and in writing in Year 6.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Durham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hartlepool Borough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector