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Dear Deborah Fance

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Heath Mount Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 December 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. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in March 2017, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and the interim executive board (IEB) 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 ensure that:

- initiatives that have been introduced become embedded to make sure that there are improved outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics
- staff continue to challenge all groups, particularly the most able, to make rapid progress in order for more pupils to reach greater depth.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and members of the IEB. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the Birmingham Educational Partnership (BEP) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans were evaluated, a number of classroom visits were made and book scrutinies took place. I also looked at a range of information, including your monitoring documents and reports from outside agencies. I considered assessment information about current pupils' progress and evaluated records of the quality of teaching and learning since you took up post as headteacher in September 2018.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant staff changes, including the appointment of you and your senior leadership team. You have also appointed four newly qualified teachers (NQTs), new phase leaders and a new mathematics lead. Although these leaders are new, they have already begun to coordinate and drive improvements in the areas that they are responsible for. Furthermore, an IEB has been established in order to challenge the school on its improvement journey.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you and your leadership team have responded by creating plans for improvement that focus clearly on the report's recommendations. Although you are still relatively new in post, your prompt actions are already beginning to bear fruit. You provide astute leadership and have wasted little time in making improvements to the quality of provision. Teachers ensure that all learners' needs are met, especially pupils with English as an additional language. Any misconceptions are identified during lessons to ensure that issues are addressed as early as possible. You have created a culture of ambition and aspiration for staff, pupils and parents. All pupils are encouraged to achieve in a caring, well-disciplined environment. As a result, outcomes and progress are starting to show some improvement, particularly attendance.

You have updated the school's improvement plan and this now contains the main areas identified from the previous inspection. But in order for this to be clearly evaluated by you and the IEB, it needs to have clear success criteria regarding impact and desired outcomes.

Members of the IEB have made numerous visits to the school, undertaking activities such as looking at books, visiting classrooms and working with senior leaders in order to check on the progress that pupils are making. Board members have commented on how the school ethos has dramatically improved since your arrival, which has had a positive impact on standards and behaviour.

Leaders at all levels are new to their roles; however, they are already extremely knowledgeable and know what more needs to be done to improve standards in their specific areas. Action plans are focused and the drive and enthusiasm these leaders display is infectious and the impact of their work is evident in books already. NQTs and new staff feel extremely well supported by your clear direction and consistency of approach. An NQT stated that there was a real 'team feel' in school due to your calm, decisive manner.

During the learning walk, it was clear that children across the early years now have access to well-resourced indoor and outdoor areas. Adults plan a wide range of interesting and purposeful activities that motivate and engage the children. Adults in the setting model language, and there is clear progress in writing in children's learning journals. Children are enthusiastic and are able to articulate what they are learning. In fact, one child was confident enough to stand on the outdoor stage unprompted to sing 'Little Donkey'.

You and your leadership team have ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is monitored effectively across the school. The majority of teaching is now good or better. However, as you have identified in your school development plan, the most able pupils still need to be challenged further in all lessons.

New initiatives that have been introduced by the mathematics and English leaders, are being used across the school consistently. These need to be further embedded if standards are to continue to rise. For example, teachers have started to plan activities to deepen the pupils' knowledge and understanding and extend their reasoning skills in all subjects. However, this is still in its infancy.

Children speak enthusiastically about their topic-based curriculum and there is evidence in books that this is varied and diverse. Children are now experiencing visits and visitors, to ensure that they experience a rich and relevant curriculum which engages and enthuses them. This is resulting in greater engagement in lessons and quality writing across the curriculum.

Pupils behave extremely well in class. They listen carefully and work well with each other. Pupils have an excellent learning attitude and are keen to do their best. Pupils are happy to help one another and are fully engaged in their lessons. This is due to the strong, positive relationships between adults and children across the school.

The website is much improved and now meets all the requirements set out by the Department for Education.

External support

Regular meetings of the IEB continue to take place. This strategic group is holding you to account for making improvements and is overseeing the school's strategic

development as it improves. You are working closely with the BEP, which is providing ongoing support. The BEP feels that a vast amount of improvement has taken place since you have taken up the headship. This is due to your hard work, determination and willingness to work with others.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Brunt

Ofsted Inspector