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13 May 2019

Rachel Minter
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Minter

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Beechwood Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 April 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in May 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, interim executive board members, and representatives from the supporting multi-academy trust and the local authority. I observed learning in five lessons and met with teachers and pupils. I considered the views of parents by reviewing Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes of meetings held by governors, school assessment information and reports from external agencies, including a review of the use of pupil premium funding. The school's statement of action and improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the previous inspection, many teaching staff have left the school. The acting headteacher left her post and you have been appointed as the new acting headteacher. The school has received formal support from a multi-academy trust. The interim executive board (IEB) has remained in place.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders, the supporting academy trust, the IEB and local authority have acted in unison to provide pupils with a better quality of education. They have taken time to consider the challenges the school faces and develop focused plans which are followed closely and reviewed regularly. This is an improving school.

At the time of the last inspection, the quality of teaching was judged inadequate. Staff are motivated and keen to improve outcomes for pupils. They appreciate, and put to good use, the support they have had to develop their teaching. For example, following a useful pupil premium review, staff received training to improve the support they provide for disadvantaged pupils. As a result of what teachers learned and successfully applied, the progress of these pupils is beginning to strengthen.

Teachers receive regular feedback on their work and appreciate the useful guidance on offer to them. For example, staff in Years 4 and 5 worked with a local school to develop the quality of their English teaching. This was typified in a series of lessons where pupils worked collaboratively to gather and use vocabulary to describe a dragon's eyes. Nevertheless, systems for tracking the performance of individual teachers require further refinement to ensure that the quality of teaching strengthens further.

Leaders' efforts to address high levels of pupil absence have been hampered in the past by the instability of leadership. Recently, changes to systems and processes have ensured that staff at all levels are charged with supporting and challenging parents to raise their child's attendance. While there is some evidence of improved attendance, the full impact of these changes is yet to be seen.

Staff have received useful training to help raise their expectations of pupils' behaviour and manage challenging behaviour successfully in class. Pupils assert that classes are now more peaceful and purposeful environments which allow them to focus and concentrate on their work. As a result, pupils are increasingly productive and enthusiastic about their learning.

Progress in mathematics is improving because pupils have developed their understanding of calculation, which they now present in a more refined and logical manner. They practise these skills often and are becoming more fluent as their

understanding grows. In most year groups, pupils are tackling challenging problems and can explain their thinking. Increasing proportions of pupils are attaining at age-related expectations in mathematics.

Pupils' writing is improving because they are increasingly able to write for a specific audience or purpose. For example, pupils wrote accounts to share an experience they had during their Easter break. However, standards of punctuation and spelling remain weak, particularly in key stage 2, meaning that these pupils are not writing at the expected standard for their age.

Topic books show that pupils learn about religious education, the arts, geography and history. For example, pupils in Year 3 learned about the Ten Commandments and used their learning to produce posters to encourage others to follow these rules. However, these subjects are often taught in isolation and do not allow pupils enough opportunity to build on their prior knowledge and understanding. As a result, pupils' progress in these lessons is weak.

In reception, staff have worked with external providers to improve their recording and sharing of assessment information. The effect of this work is twofold. Firstly, staff now have a more accurate understanding of children's progress because the information they hold is of higher quality. Secondly, this information is available for parents to view, which has helped to improve communication between the school and home.

Members of the IEB are experienced, knowledgeable and well placed to secure further improvement. They utilise their skills well to challenge leaders to improve outcomes for pupils. For example, having reviewed the systems for collecting and analysing assessment information, they developed new systems which are more efficient and accurate. The new approach offers the board a more accurate picture of pupils' progress, including those who are disadvantaged. Board members work efficiently with leaders and external agencies to gather an accurate and unbiased view of the school.

Officers from the multi-academy trust have worked closely with the school, taking time to understand the uniqueness of the setting and supporting staff to improve their teaching. For example, staff have received useful training to help them to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities better. As a result, these pupils now attend class more regularly and make better progress.

The local authority has supported the school well. Officers identified the weaknesses in the school prior to the previous inspection and put in place appropriate plans and an IEB to oversee the necessary improvements. They have successfully brokered useful support from a range of schools and a multi-academy trust to help leaders to evaluate the school effectively and drive improvements. Regular monitoring of the school's progress has helped leaders to refine their actions and identify any strategies that are not having the desired impact.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the 'serious weaknesses' designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Lambert

Her Majesty's Inspector