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Ms Lorna Culloden
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Culloden

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Carfield Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 November 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to ensure that:

- senior and middle leaders analyse pupil outcomes and use this to more precisely target support for teachers so that the quality of teaching continues to improve
- more-able pupils and those who are disadvantaged continue to accelerate their progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and middle leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. We visited classrooms together, and looked at work in pupils' books. I was able to evaluate the school's action plan and take account of monitoring and evaluation undertaken by senior and middle leaders.

Meetings were held with the Learn Sheffield school improvement partner and the chair of the governing body. Pupils' views were obtained in lessons and at lunchtime.

Context

You have faced considerable challenges in staffing since the inspection. Two teachers left the school in 2016. Seven teachers are currently off work due to long-term sickness. You took the decision, at the start of this academic year, to release the assistant headteacher and deputy headteacher from leading a class, to enable them to concentrate their efforts on monitoring the quality of learning and support improvements in teaching.

Main findings

You have tried hard to address the issues raised through the inspection by empowering leaders at all levels to generate ideas and actions and you have trusted leaders to deliver improvements. You have brokered considerable support from a range of different consultants and schools in order to kick-start the process. While staff have taken many actions, you have been thwarted by considerable staff absence, rendering it difficult to obtain consistency in the quality of teaching. However, you are beginning to turn a corner, and staff have a better understanding of how to teach reading, writing and mathematics through the systems and schemes you have introduced or consolidated.

You have received considerable challenge from your governing body to ensure that they receive accurate information about the quality of teaching and about pupils' progress. They are determined that the information they receive is based on evidence in order to hold you and your senior leaders to account. Governors are determined that senior leaders have a defined and effective role in supporting teachers. They are closely monitoring the impact of this work to ensure that school finances are appropriately spent.

Middle leaders were new to post at the point of the previous inspection and, at that time, were unable to show the impact of their work on pupils' learning. You have taken several actions to strengthen leadership within the school, including ensuring that senior leaders have time available to check on the quality of teaching. You have recruited middle leaders for all subjects and have developed systems to ensure that they report their leadership activities to you.

Middle leaders for literacy are keen to make a difference to pupils' learning in reading and writing. They have introduced a new method of teaching reading, but, as this is a recent initiative, it is not possible to determine fully the impact on learning. However, it is clear from pupils' books that expectations have been raised and that lower- and middle-attaining pupils are being challenged appropriately. Leaders acknowledge that more still needs to be done to enable the most able pupils to achieve the highest levels.

The middle leader for mathematics has developed new policies and introduced a new method of teaching mathematics across school. As yet, it is unclear just how much impact this is having on pupils' attainment overall, but early signs are that pupils are being exposed to greater challenge and more opportunities to develop mathematical reasoning. Leaders understand that there is still variability in the quality of teaching of mathematics across the school.

Teachers are making better use of assessment information when planning lessons for pupils. They are ensuring that pupils have sufficient time to acquire new concepts and skills and to practise these. Your own information shows that there is still some variability in the attainment and progress of pupils in different year groups and that this is more noticeable in mathematics. Following the inspection, you quickly commissioned a review of pupil premium spending. While staff have adopted the recommendations from the review, your information also shows that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are not making progress at the same rate as others.

You accurately identify some classes where pupils are making less progress than in others. However, outcomes at the end of key stage 1 and 2 show that there have been improvements in the quality of teaching. In 2017, pupils' progress in reading and writing at the end of key stage 2 was above average. Pupils' progress in writing was average. The proportion of pupils achieving expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics combined was above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils who left you last year made strong progress in reading and writing, but did less well in mathematics.

Outcomes in key stage 1 in 2017 were similarly positive, with more pupils than average attaining expected levels in reading and mathematics. Leaders are helping teachers to identify those pupils who are new to English. Some teachers have diligently sourced additional resources to enable these pupils to access the curriculum at an age-appropriate level.

You have ensured the accuracy of assessment in the early years through regular meetings with local schools to look at evidence. Early years staff have recently developed a new system to enable them to track the progress of children across all areas of learning. As a result, you and the local authority are confident about the accuracy of baseline information. Early years staff have visited other local schools to observe strong practice and to apply this in your school. Staff have responded well to the re-introduction of the phonics scheme and are teaching the basics of literacy well.

External support

Following the previous inspection, your initial response was to broker considerable support from a range of consultants and schools to help individual staff to develop. You have now taken stock and are managing the level of support more precisely to

ensure that staff work on the most urgent aspects of their practice. You are working effectively with the school improvement partner from Learn Sheffield, particularly to develop middle and senior leadership.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher
Her Majesty's Inspector