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Mr Ryan Cousins
Kilnhurst Primary School
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Dear Mr Cousins

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kilnhurst Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12-13 October 2016, 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 February 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in February 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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

The school should take further action to:

- quickly gain a clear view of where the weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment lie and take action to address these
- improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, two newly qualified teachers, a group of pupils, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the chief executive officer of Whitewoods Primary Academy Trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans and other documents provided by the school were evaluated. Work in pupils' books was scrutinised. You and I made brief visits to lessons accompanied by the deputy headteacher.

Context

Significant changes in staffing took place in September 2016. A new headteacher, deputy headteacher and key stage 2 leader were appointed from the current staff. A new key stage 1 leader was recruited externally. In addition, two newly qualified teachers were appointed. The deputy headteacher has taken on the role of the special educational needs coordinator.

The governing body has reformed as a smaller governing board.

It is planned that the school will become an academy as part of the Whitewoods Primary Academy Trust.

Main findings

Since the beginning of September 2016, there has been an accelerated drive for change led by you and your new leadership team. However, before that the work to address the areas for improvement was too slow.

You, the governors and the senior leaders have set the vision for the next three years. You have shared your high expectations and commitment for your school to become a good school with staff. Your plans are well thought out and link well to the support needed to bring about change and include measures of how you will judge the success of what has been achieved. A particular strength of the new leadership in the school is the willingness to engage with other providers in order to learn from their good practice.

There are some improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. However, these are inconsistent and, as a result, progress is uneven across the school. In some classes, pupils all do the same work, which is undemanding for the most able. Marking and feedback are variable and not always in line with the school's policy. In the best examples, feedback encourages pupils to think more deeply or correct misconceptions, thus contributing to better progress.

Although teachers understand the priorities you have set for the way learning should be organised, and the high expectations for all learners to reach age-related

expectations, not all are employing these systems consistently and to good effect. You do not have a clear enough view of where the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment exist across the school, although you have started to monitor and evaluate key aspects of the school such as the learning environment and behaviour. Your records show you have evaluated what you observed in these areas effectively and identified key actions for improvement. It is too early to see the impact of these actions.

There are examples of good practice. For example, in Year 6 much is demanded of pupils in their mathematics lessons. The most able are stretched and teaching ensures that all pupils understand each concept deeply. The pupils are hugely enthusiastic about their mathematics lessons as a result, and are supremely self-confident about their knowledge, understanding and skills. The unvalidated outcomes for key stage 2 tests in 2016 reflect stronger teaching in Year 6. The calculations policy for mathematics makes it clear what pupils should learn in each year group; however, it does not extend to mathematics teaching in the early years.

The teaching, learning and assessment in the early years have improved. Consequently, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development has increased. Children's records are regularly written and track development carefully. Strong evaluation of each child's progress means that children are rapidly given extra help when they need it. Children are developing their phonics skills effectively. Three children enthusiastically showed me the letters they were learning and the sounds they made. The learning environment is improving. The leader of the early years is working closely with the new teacher in Nursery to ensure that learning activities are appropriately planned. As a result, children are making better progress.

Pupils say behaviour has improved, and in the majority of the classes we visited together pupils were engaged in their learning. Records show that behaviour and bullying are more carefully monitored. Very few bullying incidents have occurred since September and they have been dealt with effectively and quickly.

Leaders are beginning to respond to the review of the impact of pupil premium spending. For example, those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are also disadvantaged, who are not making good progress, are now being tracked more closely. As a result, extra help can be allocated to pupils who need it. It is too soon to see the impact on pupils' progress.

The external review of governance was carried out promptly. Governors have acted quickly on the recommendations and reformed as a governing board with fewer governors. Regular meetings are planned to hold leaders to account. Governors are receiving appropriate training. However, it is too soon to see the impact on governance.

External support

You have taken advantage of the support brokered and offered by the local authority. Local authority representatives have provided effective support for the leaders of mathematics and early years. As a result, both these aspects of the school are improving. Local authority representatives are also contributing to improvements in literacy and are providing support for the special educational needs coordinator. You are working closely with a number of outstanding schools who are supporting you with the development of your own leadership skills and the simplification of your assessment policies. You are taking the opportunity for your staff to observe good practice in these schools. As a result, leadership and management and teaching, learning and assessment are improving.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane
Her Majesty's Inspector