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Mrs Victoria Burman
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Burman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Redbourn Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 27 February 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.

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

The school should take further action to:

- embed the newly developed assessment system that checks pupils' progress, ensuring that pupils' underachievement is rapidly identified so that all pupils achieve as well as they can
- sustain the pace of rapid improvement in raising standards by regularly checking the school's strategic development plan to ensure that deadlines set for improvements are being met
- evaluate the impact of actions more rigorously so that leaders always have an accurate view of the school's performance.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), and the subject leaders for English, mathematics and science. Additionally, I met with the chair of the governing body and the school's local authority improvement adviser. The school improvement plan was evaluated, as were several other action plans. I visited most classes, reviewed pupils' work and scrutinised a range of documents relating to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and local authority visit reports. I also considered a letter received from a parent.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in April 2016, the staff team has been largely stable. Two permanent class teachers are on maternity leave and their classes are being temporarily covered by two long-term supply teachers. The governing body has remained the same. However, there has been a recent change in leadership. The previous headteacher left the school in December 2017 and you moved from your role as deputy headteacher to acting headteacher from January 2018. A senior teacher is undertaking the role of acting deputy headteacher. This arrangement will continue until April 2018, when the school will join with Redbourn Infant School to become the new Redbourn Primary School. The school's local authority improvement partner has been appointed as the headteacher of the new primary school.

Main findings

Leaders and governors were disappointed with the April 2016 inspection report. Although staff morale was low after the inspection, the staff team has focused successfully on the areas that need to improve. Staff morale has improved because leaders have successfully developed a team with a shared understanding of, and commitment to, what needs to be done. You and the acting deputy headteacher are working effectively with all staff to raise the expectations of what pupils should achieve by the end of Year 6.

Improvements that had started to make a difference to pupils' outcomes at the April 2016 inspection have continued. Staff training and support have enabled teachers to plan more opportunities to challenge the most able pupils. Pupils are encouraged to think creatively and learn in a variety of ways. For example, the most able pupils I met with told me that they particularly enjoy their practical science lessons and the 'big questions' they discuss in their religious education lessons 'that really make us think'. The work in pupils' books and the school's most recent assessment information show that, from their starting points, the most able pupils across the school are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

The acting deputy headteacher fulfils the role of SENCo well so that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress. This is because their needs are quickly and accurately identified, and appropriate support is put in

place. The quality of this support is evaluated regularly, and amended if necessary, to make sure that individual pupils' needs continue to be met well.

You have improved the school's assessment system by introducing the rigorous tracking of each individual pupil to ensure that all pupils make sufficient progress. You have raised expectations by setting targets for each pupil in reading, writing and mathematics based on their prior attainment at the end of Year 2. This is keeping teachers focused on ensuring that pupils are on track to make at least good progress by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6. Teachers are increasingly using this information well to inform their planning and to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, it is too early to see the full impact of this work.

You and other leaders are rapidly improving the quality of teaching across the school and this is increasing the progress of pupils. Teachers have spent time observing good practice and learning from each other. This has resulted in a greater consistency in teaching approaches and expectations. All classrooms are bright, tidy and well resourced. Leaders have ensured that displays in classrooms and around the school support pupils' learning well. There are many prompts to help pupils check or better their work and celebrate what they have learned. The presentation of work in pupils' books is impressive in all classes because staff suitably reinforce accurate handwriting and neat work.

Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work against age-related expectations. They told me they enjoy reflecting on their learning because it helps them to 'see what we've done well, and what we need to improve'. Pupils were proud to show me the work in their books which demonstrated the strong progress they are making.

The governing body has a secure understanding of the school's strengths and the challenges it faces. Governors have ensured that leaders are focused on developing leadership and on improving outcomes for all pupils. Between them, the governors have a good range of useful skills to enable them to fulfil their role effectively. Governors are reflective and keen to improve their practice further. However, you and the governors do not check thoroughly that the actions the school is taking are successful in helping you to form an accurate view of the school's performance.

The school's strategic development plan focuses appropriately on the weaknesses identified during the April 2016 inspection and the school's own priorities. It is clear who leads each improvement initiative and who checks the actions taken in order to measure for success. However, the plan would benefit from regular checks against clear milestones so that those measuring for success are able to do so more accurately. Subject leaders have developed plans with well-defined actions for their areas of responsibility that more successfully guide their work, but the absence of a detailed whole-school development plan means that there is not a sufficient framework in place to pull together the work of the school or to track the effectiveness of all the actions taken.

External support

The local authority is providing effective support. Local authority consultants have been deployed to support and challenge staff. The local authority improvement partner makes regular visits to check on progress and to challenge senior and middle leaders on the impact of the leadership team. She has an in-depth knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses to bring to the role of headteacher for the new primary school.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Webb

Her Majesty's Inspector