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Mrs Noreen Dunn
Executive Headteacher
Knowleswood Primary School
Knowles Lane
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Bradford
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Dear Mrs Dunn

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Knowleswood Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 November 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are not 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:

- urgently improve the attendance of all pupils and further reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent
- increase the proportion of pupils achieving the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, your head of school and senior leaders. I also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, and two representatives from the local authority. Together, we discussed the support and actions taken since the last inspection. School documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, was evaluated. I conducted short visits to several lessons with you and the head of school. A sample of pupils' work was reviewed alongside senior leaders. I also met with a group of pupils from Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 to evaluate their views on developments since the last inspection.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing, including the leadership of the school. In July 2017, the previous headteacher and the two deputy headteachers left the school. In September 2017, following difficulties in recruitment, the local authority brokered the appointment of an interim headteacher and a deputy headteacher. In July 2018, the interim headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher responsible for early years and five teachers left the school. In September 2018, governors appointed an executive headteacher, a head of school, two assistant headteachers, two new, experienced teachers and five newly qualified teachers. In addition, the school secured the secondment of experienced staff from a neighbouring school, including a deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher and a teacher to work in Year 6. Since the last inspection, most members of the governing body have been replaced, including the chair and vice chair. The school is currently in the process of joining a federation with Cavendish Primary School.

Main findings

Over time, the pace of improvement has been too slow. Instability at leadership level and the frequent changes of staff have compounded this issue. Significant aspects of the school's work have not moved forward swiftly enough. Systems to assess pupils' progress have been ineffective. Leaders have not measured or evaluated accurately the school's performance against national outcomes. As a result, assessment information has not been used effectively to identify pupils who underachieve and to put support in place for those who need it. Consequently, the attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 2 remains below the national average. Provisional data for 2018 indicates that the progress pupils make across key stage 2 from their starting points is average in writing and mathematics and well below average in reading.

Since your recent appointment as executive headteacher, you have acted swiftly and reviewed all areas of the school, correctly identifying strengths and areas for improvement. You and the leadership team are fully committed to rapidly improving

outcomes for all pupils.

You and the chair of the governing body are managing changes effectively to eradicate weak teaching. You have been a catalyst for some recent and rapid developments. Together with senior leaders, you are passionate in your drive for continuous improvement. Governors have appointed experienced staff in some key areas of responsibility. As a result, leadership and management has been significantly strengthened.

Your improvement plans are detailed, focused and evaluated accurately against criteria for success. Leaders and governors are beginning to take a range of appropriate actions to address the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. However, it is too early to see any significant impact on the outcomes of pupils and the quality of teaching and learning.

The relatively new governing body has been strengthened further with the addition of some experienced governors. They receive appropriate information from the executive headteacher. As a result, governors are beginning to provide more robust challenge and support to school leaders.

In September 2018, you reviewed the school's assessment systems and all staff and school leaders received appropriate training on how to use them effectively. Staff now meet more regularly to discuss pupils' progress and are beginning to put support in place for the pupils who need it. Assessment systems are checked by the local authority and a partner school and leaders are now confident about the accuracy of their assessment. You and your leaders have communicated higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, you recognise that it is too early for these systems to have had a significant impact on pupils' outcomes.

You have increased the accountability of staff and raised expectations. Leaders have put in place a programme of activities to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, including lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. As a result, leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning across the school and can personalise professional development based on the needs of individual staff members. Staff now have access to examples of good practice through the school's close collaboration with your partner school.

The new head of school recently reviewed procedures for monitoring pupils' attendance. Governors have strengthened the attendance team through the appointments of an attendance officer and a charity worker. Staff are working assiduously to engage with hard-to-reach families through, for example, providing home visits and coffee mornings. Leaders have recently introduced a range of rewards for good attendance and are beginning to raise expectations across the whole school. However, absence and persistent absence remain above national averages and there is more to do to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged by poor attendance.

The systems and structures you have recently introduced to monitor the progress made by pupils are beginning to be used consistently by most staff. Staff, through regular 'expectations' meetings, are clear about ways that they can be supported to improve progress for all their pupils, including the most able. However, it is too early to see a significant impact on pupils' outcomes and you agree that outcomes, overall, need to improve at a more rapid pace.

Since your appointment, you have reviewed the learning environments across the school. You have acted swiftly, and all learning spaces have been refurbished. In a very short space of time, classrooms have become more purposeful environments. Staff have better access to the resources they need to support pupils with their learning.

You have ensured that staff have received appropriate training to develop the effective teaching of phonics. You introduced a consistent approach to early morning reading sessions to improve reading skills and reading comprehension across the school. Pupils report that they are beginning to enjoy reading more. While an early assessment of phonics indicates an improving picture, it is too early to see a significant impact of these systems on the achievement of pupils in reading.

External support

The external support provided to the school has come from the local authority and Cavendish Primary School. The local authority has brokered leadership support in the school, including in governance. The local authority school improvement adviser knows the school well and has regular reviews with you to support your school's continuous improvement. She provides challenge and professional development opportunities as well as training for leaders in the school and newly appointed governors. Consequently, action plans are focused and accurately evaluated. You have access to several specialist leaders of education and seconded experienced leaders from Cavendish Primary School. These specialist teachers provide advice and support for different aspects of school performance. As a result, staff, at all levels, are becoming more confident and developing their skills further.

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

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis
Her Majesty's Inspector