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Mr Paul Cowley
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Dear Mr Cowley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rose Wood Academy

Following my visit to your school on 19 June 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 November 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:

- improve the quality of the outdoor curriculum in the early years so that it meets the needs of children
- include precise and measurable targets in the school's development plan to improve pupils' outcomes and clearly detail how actions to improve the quality of leadership will be monitored and evaluated
- ensure that leaders, particularly phase and subject leaders, provide clear feedback to teachers on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress

when they are making checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, a group of middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and three other governors to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated alongside leaders' summary evaluation of the performance of the school. You and I conducted visits to a number of classrooms. I reviewed the work in a sample of pupils' workbooks with phase leaders to check on progress and talked informally to some pupils about their learning. I also met with a group of teaching and non-teaching staff. A range of other documentation was reviewed, including records of the checks on teachers' performance, information on the school's website and checks on the suitability of staff to work with children.

Context

Since the previous inspection, two teachers have left the school. A new teacher was appointed in January 2017. One governor resigned from the governing body and two new governors have been appointed.

Main findings

Staff at all levels have benefited from extensive professional development, including training, coaching and visits to other schools to observe practice, and are now demonstrating much stronger subject knowledge in English and mathematics. Teachers recognise that they have been given 'the tools to teach well' and teaching assistants feel valued and more confident because they now have access to the same training opportunities as teachers. Work with an external consultant to introduce a school-wide approach to developing pupils' attitudes to learning has resulted in pupils becoming more independent. They are now taking more ownership of their learning and relying less on adult support in the classroom.

You are demanding more of teaching staff through regular pupil progress meetings. Teachers now analyse the assessment information for pupils in their care and identify those pupils who need extra support to achieve well. Teachers acknowledge that they have increased their focus on key groups of pupils, including the most able. This work is starting to reap rewards. In reading, writing and mathematics, progress is beginning to accelerate across key stages 1 and 2. More pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are reaching and exceeding the expected standards for their age in each year group, compared with the start of the year.

Since the previous inspection, you have introduced a new approach to teaching higher-order reading skills. Pupils are now regularly challenged to justify their opinions using evidence from the texts they are reading. Questions set by teachers

demand that pupils use their skills of inference and deduction routinely. You are aware that, although tasks are usually set at the right level for pupils, sometimes teachers do not demand that pupils respond in sufficient depth. Occasionally, this limits the progress that pupils make.

In mathematics, pupils' workbooks show that they have more frequent opportunities to solve tricky problems. Pupils, particularly the most able, rarely waste time repeating calculations that they have already mastered, but are quickly moved on to tasks that require them to work at greater depth. Teachers are now planning a more logical sequence of activities within each unit of work, to ensure that pupils can make the best progress in their learning. Pupils receive rapid intervention to help them where they have not grasped a mathematical concept. Teachers are now providing more opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their mathematical reasoning and justify their answers. For example, pupils are often asked to 'prove it' or to 'show me how'. Pupils' workbooks, however, demonstrate that pupils are not yet confident to do this in depth. Teachers need to increase their expectations of the quality of pupils' responses to such tasks.

Since the previous inspection, phase leaders have been given a more prominent role in developing the quality of teaching. Opportunities to visit outstanding schools in the local area have improved their ability to challenge teachers in relation to the progress they are making with different groups of pupils. Phase leaders have increased the frequency of their checks on the quality of teaching through 'drop-ins' to lessons and reviews of pupils' work. However, records of these checks demonstrate that leaders are overly focused on ensuring that teachers comply with school policies and schemes of work, rather than on the impact that teaching has on pupils' learning. For example, in order to develop pupils' writing skills, a new 'redrafting tool' has been introduced. Leaders have checked to ensure that this approach is being used regularly by teachers. However, their monitoring has failed to identify that, too often, pupils' writing is not improved through the process, because of inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of how pupils approach the task. You have recognised this and, with the deputy headteacher, have new plans in place to ensure that the checks that are made on the quality of teaching focus relentlessly on the impact of teaching strategies on pupils' progress.

Your plans for improving the school are well focused on the most significant priorities and include detailed and appropriate actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They have enabled you to make gains in many aspects of the school's performance over the past two terms. However, your targets for the improvements that you wish to see to pupils' outcomes are not precise enough. You recognise, also, that you need to be clearer about the way in which improvements to the quality of leadership will be monitored and evaluated.

You have correctly identified that, within the early years, the outdoor curriculum is not securing good enough progress from children. Activities lack purpose and there are insufficient opportunities for children to develop their skills in writing and

mathematics at an appropriate level for their ability. This aspect of the early years requires urgent improvement and you have commissioned an external consultant to help you to address this issue.

External support

You have been extremely proactive in seeking a range of external support to help you to improve the quality of teaching. All staff, including senior leaders, have benefited from opportunities to see practice in other schools and to attend external training. This has contributed to the improvements that are evident to the quality of teaching in reading, writing and mathematics.

You recognise, however, that you and other leaders would benefit from more rigorous support to help you to evaluate more accurately the impact of teaching on pupils' progress over time.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector