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Mr King
Cheswardine Primary and Nursery School
Glebe Close
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Dear Mr King

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cheswardine Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 16 July 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 ensure:

- teachers' expectations are higher
- pupils receive a greater level of challenge in all lessons
- systems and procedures for recording any safeguarding and welfare concerns are better organised.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the senior teacher, a representative of the local authority and the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I observed lessons in every class. I scrutinised work in pupils' books in classes 1, 2 and 3. Observations and work scrutiny were undertaken jointly with your local authority representative. I reviewed the school's single central record, safeguarding policy and information relating to child protection and welfare.

Context

Since the last inspection, the school has experienced some instability in staffing relating to the teaching of younger pupils. Some teachers are in temporary posts. You were not at school during the inspection.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have not ensured that the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection are improving quickly enough. In particular, the quality of teaching and the impact it has on learning are still too variable. Therefore, pupils' progress is not consistently strong in key stage 1 and in parts of key stage 2. However, leaders have secured improvements in methods of assessment, attainment in some year groups and governance.

Governors now undertake a greater level of monitoring. Minutes of governing body minutes evidence a higher level of challenge and support. Governors visit the school regularly to check to see if standards are rising. Governors' visit notes are detailed but are not sufficiently focused on improvement issues. Governors do not routinely check to see how their visits link to the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. As a result, some key issues are not being adequately tracked and remain weak.

Governors are honest and frank about the school's shortcomings and know that more needs to be done to ensure that overall effectiveness is securely good.

Subject leaders are now in place. They monitor different aspects of the curriculum in their areas of responsibility and provide teachers with feedback. For example, the senior teacher has reviewed the teaching of reading. The evaluations provide very useful strengths and areas for development for the teaching team to reflect on. As a result, in reading lessons pupils are exploring a wider range of texts and teachers are adopting a more consistent approach to how they match learning to pupils' needs.

The headteacher has worked with a national leader of education to sharpen school

improvement plans. The plan comprehensively responds to the shortcomings identified at the last inspection. Leaders' actions rightly focus on offering staff additional training to develop their practice. However, some milestones within the plan are too broad. The anticipated impact that different training or strategies will have on pupils' progress is not clear. Some milestones focus solely on national benchmarks, as opposed to also taking account of pupils' starting points. There is not enough emphasis on the expectations of the progress that pupils currently on roll will make.

Leaders have begun to make more frequent checks on the quality of learning in history and geography. The school has devised useful assessment grids that allow teachers to track pupils' learning. Teachers have also been encouraged to plan more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in humanities. While some key improvements have been secured in parts of key stage 2, pupils' progress is variable across the rest of the school. This is because some teachers do not have high enough expectations. There is often insufficient challenge in these subjects or very few opportunities for pupils to practise their writing.

Though teachers regularly discuss their work and have established a range of useful and effective assessment tools, they have not had opportunities to watch one another teach and see the impact of the school's best practice at first hand. This strategy is outlined in the school's development plan, but has not yet been put into place. As a result, the overall impact of teaching varies.

The school has introduced a single approach to the teaching of handwriting. This is beginning to address the poor standards of handwriting that were evident at the last inspection. Pupils' handwriting and presentation are improving rapidly in Years 5 and 6. The books that were scrutinised during the inspection in this part of the school were of a high standard. Older pupils take pride in what they do. However, the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation is mixed in Years 3 and 4 and weak in parts of key stage 1.

Teaching in English, mathematics and science lessons now generally offers more challenge for pupils. For example, in some lessons teachers make checks on pupils' learning and encourage them to move onto additional challenges to deepen their understanding. However, this better level of challenge is not embedded in daily practice. Teachers' expectations are not routinely high enough in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2.

During lesson observations, it was clear that pupils enjoy their learning. In classes 1 and 2, pupils were learning about seed dispersal. Pupils used the correct terminology to describe life cycles and explored a wide range of different seeds. In class 3, pupils diligently followed the teacher's instructions and were immersed in their chosen reading books. Pupils were also keen to tell me about their upcoming play that charts the adventures of a young boy and a dragon. In most of the lessons observed, teachers asked effective questions and encouraged pupils to

explain and justify their answers.

Pupils' behaviour throughout the inspection was excellent. Pupils say that they feel safe and that they are not worried about bullying. Leaders have attended training to ensure that legislation relating to safer recruitment procedures is fully understood and implemented. Staff also receive regular safeguarding updates. However, systems for recording safeguarding concerns and wider welfare issues are too informal. Leaders, governors and the local authority acknowledge that these systems must develop so that any issues can be tracked in a clearer way. The school's response to this aspect of provision will be reviewed again at the next inspection.

Teachers plan a range of practical activities and extra-curricular opportunities to help pupils think for themselves and make choices. This is particularly the case in science. Pupils have regular opportunities to think about what they want to find out and undertake exciting practical scientific experiments. Staff have also worked hard to forge strong links with a partner school in Ulm, Germany. Pupils have visited one another and learned much about their respective cultures. This work promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.

Parents whom I spoke to during the inspection hold very positive views about the school. However, responses from parents on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are more mixed.

External support

The local authority has commissioned a national leader of education and school improvement adviser to offer a greater level of support and challenge to the school. This work has particularly developed governance, aspects of strategic planning and the capacity of leadership. However, several aspects of the school's work still require significant development. The overall quality of teaching is not ensuring that pupils make the progress that they are capable of.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay

Her Majesty's Inspector